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DUNGEON™

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT

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The Joke's on You

You just don't know where or when the funny will jump out and bite you.

You see, we were looking for a gnome. He had some information we needed, and thanks to some savvy Streetwise checks, we knew where and when to find him. The thing is, when we got to his office, rather than wait in the queue to see our would-be informant, we ... well, we kicked down the door.

The gnome panicked. Who wouldn't? If a bunch of folks armed like a medieval SWAT team kicked in the door to your office, you'd likely freak, right? Well, that's what the gnome did. He hit a snappy button on his desk and dropped through a trapdoor escape hatch, setting off a skill challenge chase through the city streets. Did I mention the gnome had a slave ogre? And that he rode the ogre like Master Blaster through the crowded city?

It sounds absurd, goofy, and yes, funny when I relate the story now. But in Chris Perkins's campaign, this is par for the course. Naturally, we were agog at a gnome riding an enslaved ogre like some bestial warhorse. What followed, however...

You see, succeeding (and we did succeed) at the chase skill challenge was only part one of the equation. Once we'd captured the gnome and rendered him unconscious, we had to slip away into the bustling city and evade the militia bearing down on us. *That* skill challenge—that one we failed.

My character is a filthy liar. He lies even when it doesn't suit him, even when doing so might be disadvantageous. As curious onlookers saw us "escorting" our new friend away, now swaddled in a heavy cloak, I thought that dousing him in some ale and claiming he was my drunken companion—passed out after a night's hard partying—would be smart. Only, I rolled a natural 1 on my Bluff check.

Rodney Thompson, who wasn't paying attention to my feeble story, then turned to tell a different passer-by that "the child" had fainted at the sight of so much drama in the streets. Turns out his dice had visited the same pile of suck mine had, and our back-to-back failed checks were sufficient to seal the deal on that skill challenge.

Of course, the best part was that we weren't paying attention to one another and mixed up our stories, Chris penalized us appropriately (invoking a penalty on Rodney's Bluff check), and we ended up cracking up the entire table with our combined story about buying booze for minors.

In the spirit of April Fool's, humor's been on my brain a fair amount, and one of the regular questions we get at shows is why we don't do more "funny adventures." I'm sometimes tempted, but this episode really enabled me to put my finger on why I feel like doing so isn't a great idea. The best humor doesn't come from the printed product. In fact, humor integrated into an adventure always feels forced to me. The funniest moments at the game come from the people at the table.

When you're sitting around anywhere with your close friends, jokes are inevitable. D&D is no exception. We know that humor at the gaming table will be there whether or not we try to inject it. Plus, sense of humor is about as subjective as you can get. A joke that sends one person into spasms is likely to get a blank stare from another. No, we think the jokes are best left to you and your table. And to April Fool's Day, of course.

What about your group? Do you have a story about events at the table contributing to a humor-based meltdown? Or do you disagree about the effectiveness of humor in published products? Send us your stories and opinions to dndinsider@wizards.com.

Alliance at Nefelus

By Chris Tulach

An adventure for 14th-level characters

illustrations by Jason A. Engle, Ralph Horsley, William O'Connor, Steve Prescott, Wayne Reynolds, Lars Grant West and Eva Widermann

cartography by Mike Schley

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"Long have we strove to remain detached from the affairs of the mainland. But this threat taxes us to the limits of our power, and so we reach out to those who have proven themselves time and time again. Perhaps, if you aid us, we will consider assisting your cause as a means of gratitude."

–Bejam, member of the Thraxinium of Nefelus

SCALES OF WAR™

"Alliance at Nefelus" is an adventure for 14th-level characters. At the end of the adventure, the PCs should be midway through 15th level. Although this adventure is part of the Scales of War adventure path, it takes the plot in a different direction as new friends and foes are discovered. It also makes a good stand-alone adventure or is inserted easily into your own ongoing campaign.

In this adventure, the PCs are again joined by their friend Amyria, the deva last seen in "Haven of the Bitter Glass," the previous adventure. She musters the PCs to respond to a call for aid from the island nation of Nefelus, an isolationist magocracy that is under an environmental threat. If the PCs can help put an end to Nefelus's troubles, Nefelus might be willing to lend their extensive arcane knowledge and naval might to the Coalition.

Background

The island nation of Nefelus, a lush tropical realm that has long kept itself isolated from the dealings of the rest of the world, has recently found its tranquil peace disturbed by a threat that even its deva-led mage council (known as the Thraxinium) cannot squelch. Several weeks ago, a mysterious ice floe appeared a few miles off the coast of the island, and within a few days, the warm and pleasant climate of Nefelus began to grow colder, threatening the natural order.

Nefelus took action as soon as it was apparent that the conditions were getting more severe. Endowed with a formidable navy to protect themselves from pirates and foreign interlopers, the Thraxinium dispatched vessels to the ice floe to investigate, and if necessary, fight any present threat. However, unusual arctic sahuagin attacked the ships—some speculate that an unknown force apparently transformed and bolstered them. Only one vessel made it to the ice floe, and no reports came back from its crew.

Several days passed, and the Thraxinium debated their next course of action as they did research to combat the threat of the climate change. While they were preparing their next moves, the magical cold emanating from the ice floe intensified and over the course of one night, it formed an icy ring that cut off any ships bound in or out of the ports. The nation of Nefelus was under siege, and the weather was getting worse. The ice threatens to continue to spread, and possibly engulf the entire island.

A few days ago, several members of the Thraxinium reported that they were enacting a ritual that would stave off any further climatic change as long as the forces behind the unnatural cold did not greatly intensify. Although that bought a little time, it still meant that many members of the Thraxinium had to spend considerable resources maintaining the ritual just to keep the island from being overwhelmed, and the icy ring still separated Nefelus from any help by sea.

Despite being isolationist, several Thraxi (members of the Thraxinium) still maintained contact with the outside world. Bejam, a deva on the Thraxinium, formed a friendship with a deva named Amyria. She had been working to convince the Thraxinium to join an allied Coalition of the mortal realm intent on defeating a githyanki invasion. But Nefelus had seen nothing of the githyanki save for a single, strange burglary attempt years before, and they'd heard even less. Reluctant to get involved, the Thraxi, through Bejam, politely refused all Amyria's requests. When the Thraxinium ran out of options to deal with the threat of the ice blockade, however, Bejam turned to Amyria for aid.

What Is an Adventure Path?

Scales of War is the fourth Adventure Path to appear in the pages of Dungeon® *Magazine*. But what, you ask, is an Adventure Path? Quite simply, it is a series of related adventures intended to form a complete D&D campaign that takes your players from 1st level all the way to, in the case of Scales of War, 30th level.

Previous Adventure Paths, presented with the 3rd Edition D&D® rules, took characters from 1st to 20th level. But with all three tiers in the new edition ripe and ready to explore, we're pushing the limit with Scales of War. Each tier takes roughly six adventures to traverse, which means we'll finish off this Adventure Path in about eighteen issues. Each adventure advances characters from between one and a half to two levels of experience. We recognize that not everyone will meet every encounter or complete every quest, however, so periodically, we'll point you to a supplemental Side Trek or short adventure to keep your PCs on pace. Plus, roughly every few months, Dragon® will feature new support content for Scales of War.

Finally, this Adventure Path is intended to function as a complete D&D campaign. That means we'll be making assumptions about the history of the world as we move along, just as you would in any campaign you run. We'll be borrowing heavily from the D&D mythology of 4th Edition, as well as all the great ideas that have cropped up in other products over the years—including the pages of past issues of *Dungeon*!

Enjoy your stay in Scales of War, and keep an eye out for next month's installment.

Bejam's message found its way to Amyria just before the Coalition's first meeting in Sayre. Once the events of "Haven of the Bitter Glass" ended, freeing Nefelus became Amyria's top priority. She approached the Coalition and told them of Nefelus's problems, and their need for assistance. The Coalition agreed to send Amyria as an envoy to Nefelus in the hopes that aid to Nefelus might bring them out of seclusion and into the battle against the githyanki. They did so despite the protests of the Coalition's leader, Lord Torrance, who secretly still fears that adding Nefelus to the group will diminish Sayre's importance.

Amyria knew that she'd need assistance in case battle was necessary, and turned to the PCs to accompany her to Nefelus. Chartering a ship called *Brindol's Pride*, the adventure begins on board the ship as the characters near the icy ring surrounding Nefelus. The events of "Alliance at Nefelus" take place a few weeks after "Haven of the Bitter Glass" ended.

Adventure Synopsis

The characters begin the adventure aboard *Brindol's Pride*, a warship flying under the colors of the Coalition. There, they are briefed by Amyria, a longtime and staunch ally of the characters. Recently she was named special envoy to Nefelus, the island nation magocracy led by a council of devas. On board the ship, they are briefed of the mission ahead—Nefelus is blockaded by an unknown antagonist, who has conjured a massive ice floe around the island and is assaulting the tropical land with the bitter cold of a northern winter.

The first task ahead of the PCs is to enter Nefelus. The ship is equipped with a specially designed ramming bow and a reinforced hull to break through the ice. The fog coming off the ice mixing with the hot tropical weather makes it particularly difficult to see the ice ring until the PCs are right on it, at which point they notice that they have company—a frost giant contingent patrolling the ice to ensure that none break through from either side. After dealing with the frost giants and breaking through the ice, the ship continues on to Nefelus.

Once the PCs arrive in Nefelus, they are taken to quarters to rest while Amyria meets with the Thraxinium. After a short while, Amyria asks the characters to accompany her to be introduced to Bejam, a member of the Thraxinium. Bejam explains what they know about the icy ring, the climate changes, the *Seed of Winter*, and the sightings of unusual sahuagin creatures. The characters are asked to journey to the ice floe and put a stop to the punishing cold and blockade that imperils Nefelus. In exchange, the Thraxinium rewards the PCs for their efforts and considers aiding the Coalition. However, time is running short for Nefelus; the cold assault is growing and the containment ritual will end soon.

The Quests

In "Alliance at Nefelus," the PCs attempt to put an end to the drastic climatic changes being put forth from the massive iceberg lair called Icehome, just off the coast of the island of Nefelus. As a result of these actions, Nefelus will aid the Coalition, and the PCs can also attempt to convince one of their important magisters to join the Coalition. In addition, they retrieve an artifact known as the *Seed of Winter* from Icehome and can bring it back to Nefelus for research, and they can attempt to retrieve one of the members of the last expedition to the iceberg—a githzerai named Uarion.

Major Quest—Save Nefelus
Nefelus's tropical climate is threatened by a massive ice floe just off its shore. A ring of ice has formed around the island, and the PCs must find a way to stop the encroaching cold from destroying the island's environment.

Reward: 5,000 XP (and 275 pp—the equivalent of three 15th- and one 14th-level treasure parcels—plus the *elemental prism* as promised by the Thraxinium).

Major Quest—Persuade Bejam to Join the Coalition
Although succeeding in saving Nefelus endears the Nefelese to the PCs, it would be an even greater boon to have one of the Thraxi seated on the Coalition.

Reward: 5,000 XP.

Minor Quest—Recover the *Seed of Winter*
Although the Nefelese don't know who is responsible for directing the attack on their island, they do know that the tool being used against them is a legendary artifact known as the *Seed of Winter*, long since thought to have been in the Feywild.

Reward: 1,000 XP.

Minor Quest—Retrieve Uarion
The only survivor of the previous mission to the iceberg, the githzerai Uarion might still be alive. He is an accomplished mentalist and someone of importance to the Thraxinium.

Reward: 1,000 XP.

The PCs need to head back through the icy ring, but to arrive at Icehome with little chance of detection, they can travel underwater. They are given three *apparatuses of Kwalish* to use to make it to the ice floe. Amyria stays behind to negotiate an alliance with Nefelus.

The characters attempt to dodge sahuagin patrols and make their way to the ice floe, discovering either the underground entrance to Icehome or the last remaining intact sailing ship of the previous expedition on the surface of the ice. Either way, they run into arctic sahuagin and must fight their way farther into Icehome.

Inside Icehome, the characters find a network of caverns occupied by creatures that are apparently subservient to or allied with Chillreaver, a double-headed white dragon that they might have glimpsed on their way into Icehome. In addition, they have the opportunity to learn information from a githzerai now allied with Chillreaver that journeyed with the last landing party from Nefelus.

As they ascend to the upper levels of Icehome, they must deal with Chillreaver's personal guards and, finally, the white dragon himself. He is engaged in a ritual to bring the full power of the *Seed of Winter* to bear on Nefelus, attempting to shatter the containment ritual the Nefelese have in place. The characters must fight Chillreaver and stop the *Seed of Winter* from generating the unnatural cold. Once the ritual is broken and Chillreaver defeated, Icehome begins to collapse and the characters must flee before they are crushed in the crumbling ice floe.

If they successfully return to Nefelus after defeating Chillreaver and retrieving the *Seed of Winter*, they can attempt to help Amyria convince Bejam to join the Coalition and fight alongside the forces of good against the githyanki invaders.

Preparing for Adventure

"Alliance at Nefelus" has the PCs beginning with a blockade run to enter Nefelus, where they quickly turn around to leave for Icehome, the lair of Chillreaver and source of the Nefelese problem.

This adventure is relatively straightforward to start, but you should at least read the introductory material and the information on Chillreaver so you have an idea of what the group's up against. Most of the combat encounters inside Icehome are easy enough to run with limited prep time, although the first encounter ("H1. Blockade Run") and first skill challenge ("Approaching Icehome") should be allocated reading time.

What You Need to Play

This adventure includes the encounters the PCs face as they explore and adventure in the area. It also provides tactical maps and more for the adventure. If you and your players haven't read through the Dungeons & Dragons® 4th Edition rules yet, that is your first best step so that you make certain you understand the rules. Also as mentioned above, read through at least the first of the adventure's "chapters" before starting. This review enables you to become familiar with the material and the style of presentation. You might also want to take a look at the sections below regarding the adventure format.

Adapting the Adventure

"Alliance at Nefelus" is designed with five players in mind. You can adapt the adventure for larger groups easily by adding more treasure and inserting a few extra monsters using the guidelines presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. When adapting the adventure for larger groups, keep it simple. Where possible, just add one monster whose level equals the encounter level for each additional PC. Otherwise, look for appropriate monsters from this adventure (see the Appendix, in particular) and the *Monster Manual*® or *Monster Manual 2* to help stiffen up the resistance. *Monster Manual 2* contains a great deal of new monsters appropriate for paragon tier play.

This adventure is also designed for 14th-level characters. As written, a slightly larger group of 13th-level characters can play through the adventure, but be sure to give the characters plenty of chances to take extended rests so that they can have a fair shot at surviving the expedition. For higher-level groups, adapting the adventure takes a bit more work. You need to add monsters and increase the treasure rewards to amounts appropriate for the characters. In all, adjusting the adventure is not too arduous, and with a little work, you can run this scenario for groups of three to eight players, and for characters of 13th through 16th level.

Treasure Preparation

As with previous installments of the Scales of War campaign, "Alliance at Nefelus" makes use of the parcel system of treasure rewards as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The characters should accumulate fifteen parcels by the end of the adventure. Of these, they should gain the reward for completing the quests (four parcels for 27,500 gp or 275 pp and the *elemental prism*), and then whatever treasures they find along the way (the remaining ten). You can supply these treasures in whatever way you wish, but the Treasure Parcels sidebar presents the most likely rooms to have treasure. During your preparation, assign parcels from those that follow to the rooms in the spaces provided. Use the players' wish lists to come up with magic items for the first five parcels. (Consider saving at least one or two of the highest level magic items for later in the adventure, after the PCs have acheived 15th level.)

Treasure Parcels

Parcel A: Parcel 6 I2 Behir Lair.
Parcel B: _____ I2 Behir Lair.
Parcel C: _____ I3 Xurgelmek's Chamber.
Parcel D: _____ I4 Uarion's Fate (on Uarion's person).
Parcel E: _____ I5 Icy Sappers (in the crevasse).
Parcel F: Parcel 9 I6 Frost Giant Enclave.
Parcel G: _____ I6 Frost Giant Enclave (on the person of Nara of the Waste).
Parcel H: _____ Chillreaver's Treasure Chamber.
Parcel I: _____ Chillreaver's Treasure Chamber.
Parcel J: _____ Chillreaver's Treasure Chamber.

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the following parcels can go in the spaces above. Rely on the wish lists your players gave you for the first eight parcels.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 18.
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 17.
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 17.
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 16.
Parcel 5: Magic item, level 15.
Parcel 6: A small wooden box with an *elixir of invisibility** and 2 pieces of amber carved into stars (100 gp each).
Parcel 7: A sparkling blue diamond worth 5,000 gp and two *potions of vitality*.
Parcel 8: A velvet pouch with four ivory statuettes—a monkey, a snake, an elephant, and a panther (6,000 gp total for the set); and 1,000 gp.
Parcel 9: A large sack of gold coins (10,000 gp) minted in a northern land beyond the Winterbole Forest.
Parcel 10: A platinum ring with Bahamut's symbol worth 2,500 gp and an ornate ruby-encrusted silver letter opener worth 1,500 gp.
*Found in *Adventurer's Vault*™.

Starting the Adventure

This adventure begins several weeks after the events in the last Scales of War adventure, "Haven of the Bitter Glass." The PCs have had a chance to rest and recover, and if they're a little short on XP before tackling this adventure, you can run them through a side trek to get them to 14th level. Once the adventure begins, there is little time for the PCs to engage in any sort of activities outside the scope of the adventure.

Amyria, Envoy to Nefelus

A deva scion of Bahamut and force for good, Amyria is responsible for spearheading the efforts to bring together the Coalition against the githyanki incursion. Amyria has been tasked to become the special envoy to the isolationist island nation of Nefelus, due in part to her heritage (the rulers of Nefelus are all devas) and also because she has shown that she is a capable diplomat. She is passionate, caring, and charismatic. The PCs are her favorites when it comes to getting a job done, and thus she has taken them along to help with Nefelus's problem.

Amyria's statistics are in the tactical encounter "H1. Blockade Run."

Striking an Accord

The adventure begins with the PCs aboard the *Brindol's Pride*, a specially outfitted caravel that is designed specifically to break through the ice ring that is cutting off the island nation of Nefelus from the rest of the world. Joining the PCs aboard is Amyria, the scion of Bahamut and recently appointed envoy to Nefelus. If the characters have participated in "Den of the Destroyer" or "Haven of the Bitter Glass," they're sure to know Amyria.

When the players are ready to begin, read the following:

About a week ago, you left the city of Sayre at the behest of your friend and staunch ally Amyria, a deva scion devoted to Bahamut's cause and the opposition of evil in the world. She asked you to accompany her on a mission to the isolationist island nation of Nefelus. When she mentioned to you that you should dress for cold weather even though Nefelus's a tropical island, the questions started flying. She gave you a full briefing as you prepared to depart aboard Brindol's Pride, an odd-looking caravel with a reinforced hull and a sharpened steel bow.

What the PCs Know

The PCs were provided with the following information from Amyria at the outset of the mission. Amyria mentions that more information should be forthcoming once they arrive in Nefelus.

The tropical island nation of Nefelus is under assault by a sort of unnaturally cold weather. It is obvious to the Nefelese that this environmental change is being directed by a malign intelligence.

Nefelus is an isolationist nation run by a council of deva mages called the Thraxinium. They are known to be among the most knowledgeable arcanists in the world, and their storehouses of information contain secrets lost to the other civilized races. In addition, their navy is incredibly strong and bolstered by their ancient magic. With these two assets, Nefelus has remained fiercely independent until their recent call for aid to Amyria.

The chilling weather has become so intense that a ring of ice has formed around the island, trapping their ships and cutting off any travel to or from the island. Although the Thraxinium is maintaining a ritual to keep the worst of the cold from assaulting the island proper, they cannot maintain it for much longer.

Amyria and the Coalition have decided to come to Nefelus's aid with the hopes that Nefelus will join the Coalition if they are successful. The captain of the caravel *Brindol's Pride* volunteered to have his ship fitted with the appropriate equipment to break through ice, and Amyria assembled a team (the PCs) to accompany her to the island.

DC 22 Insight: Amyria is keeping something from the characters, which is uncharacteristic of her. If pressed, she admits that she is uneasy about meeting other devas, especially some as ancient as members of the Thraxinium. She is also concerned that if she fails in this task, the Coalition forces will lack a key ally—one that can provide substantial military and magical support.

When the PCs have been briefed, read the following:

Your journey to Nefelus is now almost complete. A massive bank of fog looms directly ahead, and the air becomes chilly. A cry comes out of the crow's nest from the lookout. "Iceberg to starboard!" Looking to the right, you can see a gigantic, shadowed mass far off in the fog, and it stands at least 100 feet tall.

You continue on, the waves licking at the hull of the ship, and then finally, after a few more cold hours, the fog begins to lift and you see a thick ring of ice floating up ahead. Smaller chunks of ice, some the size of large wagons, bob up and down in the water near the ship. Just as you see a clear picture of the ice ring and the captain is preparing to ram, you notice that several large forms become visible through the mist.

Tactical Encounter: H1. Blockade Run (page 18).

Welcome to Nefelus

After their run-in with the frost giant patrol, the ship continues on to the port of Nefelus.

You sail on through the cold and fog for another mile or so. Abruptly, the fog lifts, the sun shines, and you are awash in the steamy heat of a tropical paradise.

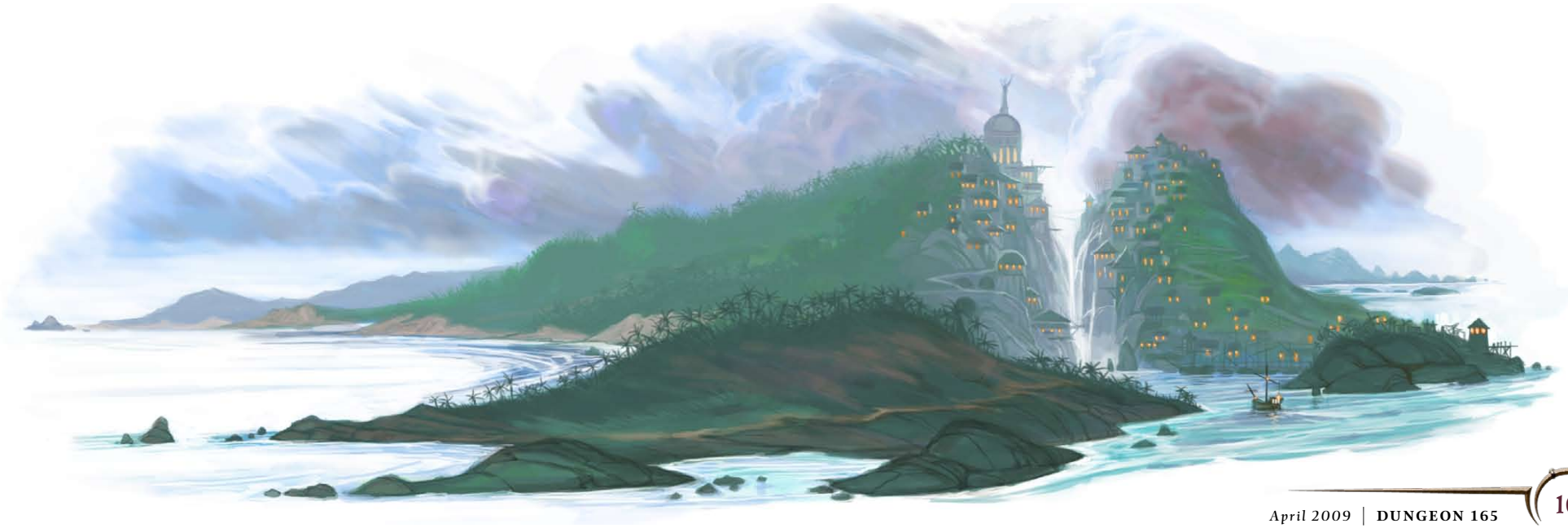
As the ice rapidly melts off the ship's bow, you see a city rise before you, clinging to the massive cliffs of an inlet. All around you in the bay, fishing boats and naval vessels meander about, clinging close to the shores. Many more are docked along the cliff shores. Switchback stairs, walkways, and small wooden buildings dot the lush cliffsides. At the far top of the cliffs, hundreds of feet in the air, larger wooden structures are packed tightly together, huddled close to the cliff's edge and away from the dense rainforest that surrounds the city. At the horizon, a great domed structure rises above all to dominate the skyline; from this distance, it looks like a temple or perhaps a university.

Amyria explains to the PCs that the Nefelese don't have many visitors from the mainland, and it is both an honor and a privilege to be allowed to enter as guests. She also explains that Nefelus is both the name of their capital and nation, and that few other settlements are on the island. She can also provide most of the information in the sidebar on Nefelus if asked (except for the names of the taverns and supply shops), since she has been briefed by the Coalition upon being appointed special envoy.

Nefelus's History

A character knows the following information with a successful History check.

DC 11: *Nefelus is an island nation ruled by a council of deva mages called the Thraxinium. Nefelus has one of the largest known contingents of devas in the world; some say that almost the entire island is sacred ground and most devas reincarnate here. All citizens of prominence are devas. The Nefelese have remained isolationist for at least the last two centuries, having little contact with the mainland.*



DC 18: *The Nefelese believe that knowledge and magical prowess are the two greatest attributes an individual can possess. Their ancient and massive Great Library, which also serves as their governmental seat, university, and temple to Corellon and Ioun, is said to contain secrets long lost to the rest of the world.*

DC 23: *The Nefelese have lived on this island for as long as anyone can remember, and in times past, they used to trade and relate to the other nations of the world. However, a threat from the Elemental Chaos more than two centuries ago almost destroyed their idyllic culture. They blamed the other civilizations for their ignorance, and after ensnaring the threat and locking it away in the world, withdrew almost all ties to the mainland.*

Nefelus

Capital and only city of the tropical island nation bearing the same name, Nefelus is built among the vegetation on either side of the high cliffs of an inlet.

Population: 32,500; few live more than a mile from the cliffside shores, since the rainforest beyond is dense. Most of the residents are devas; there is a minority population of eladrin, elves, gnomes, half-elves, and humans here. The rest of the races are unknown to Nefelus, although some say that dwarves, dragonborn, and goliaths live in the mountains in the interior of the island.

Government: Nefelus is a magocracy, ruled by a council of seven deva mages called the Thraxinium. The council is elected once every ten years by devas that possess the ability to cast rituals. No other Nefelese citizens are allowed to vote for the Thraxinium. The government sits in the Great Library, a massive domed structure that rises above all other buildings and is also the university, library, and main temple complex to Corellon and Ioun. In foreign affairs, Nefelus is isolationist, conducting only limited trade and relations with the outside world.

Defense: Nefelus is without a standard army or militia, having rebuked any external threats with their magic or naval might. Rather, they have the Nefallum, an organized military force consisting of approximately 100 deva mages, answerable to the Thraxinium. They also have a 200-ship navy known as the Sea Sentinels, consisting of about 2,500 officers, sailors, and marines. Their naval vessels are often powered by magic and are considered some of the finest crafted in the world.

Inns: Due to its isolationist nature, there is little profit to be had for an innkeep. Those that seek boarding can arrange such with a boarding house.

Taverns: Navah's House of Spirits, Gertie's Brown Bottle, The Green Parrot.

Supplies: Gamal's Gear, Nefelus Outfitters.

Temples: The Great Library (Corellon and Ioun), The Valorous Spire (Bahamut), Brighthall (Pelor); Melora is worshiped at small shrines in most homes and by sailors.

Meeting Bejam

Meeting the deva Thraxi is an important event. The PCs have the chance to make a good impression on the leadership of Nefelus.

Roleplaying Encounter: Meeting Bejam (page 21).

Once the PCs have agreed to help Nefelus out, Bejam escorts them out of the sitting room into the entry hall where the PCs meet up with Amyria. He asks the PCs if he can provide any mundane provisions for the PCs, and he offers up spiked ice shoes if the PCs want them.

With Amyria in tow, Bejam escorts you down one of those mysterious hallways that leads farther into the Great Library. At the end of the hall, a spiral staircase leads down into the darkness. As you descend down, softly glowing orbs affixed to the walls light your way. The stairs continue for hundreds of feet. Eventually, you come to a door with a strange series of sigils on its face. Bejam softly intones some words and the sigils flash. He opens the door, revealing a workshop with all sorts of tools and arcane objects lying about on various tables.

Beyond the workshop, the cavernous room is what looks to be a dock, but no tunnel leads out into a waterway. Floating in the pool are three curious objects; they look like giant silvery lobsters with glass windows where their eyes should be. You can see seats and a number of levers through the windows; these appear to be a sort of vehicle.

Bejam explains that those three vehicles are known as *apparatuses of Kwalish*, named after the wizard that invented them. He then continues to brief the PCs on their mission in a conversational manner.

- When we realized that the first ships were attacked and the ice ring blockaded us, we prepared these vehicles for use. They are submersible craft.

- ✦ The PCs are to pilot the *apparatuses of Kwalish* to the iceberg so they arrive without much notice. The previous attempts at traveling by ship and the presence of the ice ring make conventional means of getting there riskier.
- ✦ Each *apparatus* can carry two people. One of the two needs to be piloting at all times; the other should keep lookout and can operate the claws if needed. The vehicles are equipped on the lever console with a homing arrow that has been attuned to the iceberg such that the arrow always points toward the iceberg.
- ✦ It should take approximately 3 hours to reach the iceberg from here. The vehicles are easy enough to pilot. You need to surface the vessels after you arrive so that the air can be replenished; there's only enough air in one of these to take you there. (Bejam gives the PCs a quick course in piloting the *apparatus*.)

After your piloting instructions, Bejam assembles you all at the dock. "I have two more items for you to take with you. I am certain that they will be of aid to you on the mission." He produces a small flickering prism and a scroll tube from his robe.

"This object is called an elemental prism. We know that the Seed of Winter grants creatures under its influence resistance to cold attacks, and the prism allows the user to circumvent such defenses while providing the user with protection."

"The ritual inked on this scroll is called Solace Bole. It will transport you to a small secluded place in a pocket plane where you can rest and regroup. Time will pass normally there, but when you return, only an hour will have gone by. With the short amount of time we have before our defenses are shattered, you might find this necessary."

Statistics for the *apparatus of Kwalish* can be found in *Adventurer's Vault* (page 17), and statistics for the *elemental prism* and the Solace Bole ritual are located in Appendix II (see page 50). The *elemental prism* is considered a treasure parcel for the party, since they keep it at the conclusion of the adventure.

Bejam can also obtain any other mundane provisions the PCs think that they might need for the journey, including spiked ice shoes that might provide them with better grip on areas of slick ice, at the cost of speed (see "Using Ice Shoes" on page 13).

Bejam wishes the PCs good luck on their mission and helps the PCs enter the vehicles if needed.

As the PCs are ready to depart in the submersibles, read:

Amyria asks one of you to reopen the hatch. She leans in and says quietly, "One last thing before you leave. I think that it might be possible to convince Bejam to join the Coalition as a representative of Nefelus. I will stay here and attempt to work toward that goal, but ultimately it will depend on the success of your mission. May the platinum dragon bring justice to our enemies."

Approaching Icehome

Once inside the apparatuses, the PCs must travel through the depths of the sea to Icehome.

Skill Challenge: SC1. Traveling to Icehome (page 23).

Icehome

Constructed from Chillreaver's will and the power of the *Seed of Winter*, Icehome is the epicenter of the climate changes and the white dragon's lair. It is still continuing to grow, and a floating ice bridge miles long connects it to the ice ring off the coast of Nefelus. Only two entrances lead into Icehome; either through the mountainous calderalike opening at the top of the iceberg (which the dragon, ice gargoyles, and frost giants use), or the undersea entrance that the arctic sahuagin use.

Icehome was formed only recently, and the bottom levels of the iceberg lair are still in a rough state. Chillreaver has concentrated most of his recent energy on creating the ice ring blockade that surrounds Nefelus and hasn't had the opportunity yet to refine the under-dwellings.

Icehome consists of three levels. On the lowest level, the arctic sahuagin baron Xurgelmek and an eye of frost beholder maintain order among the other arctic sahuagin and their pets. This level is also just below the surface of the sea, and the entrance to Icehome is underwater. This level is connected to the second level by a shaft that the beholder commonly uses to give reports on the sahuagin to the frost giants.

Frost giants rule the second level of Icehome; in particular, a frost giant ice shaper named Nara of the Wastes heads up the forces. In addition, Chillreaver has designated this level as the place to keep prisoners, since the frost giants are better organized and less prone to outright savagery than the sahuagin. An ice bridge leads directly up to the third level.

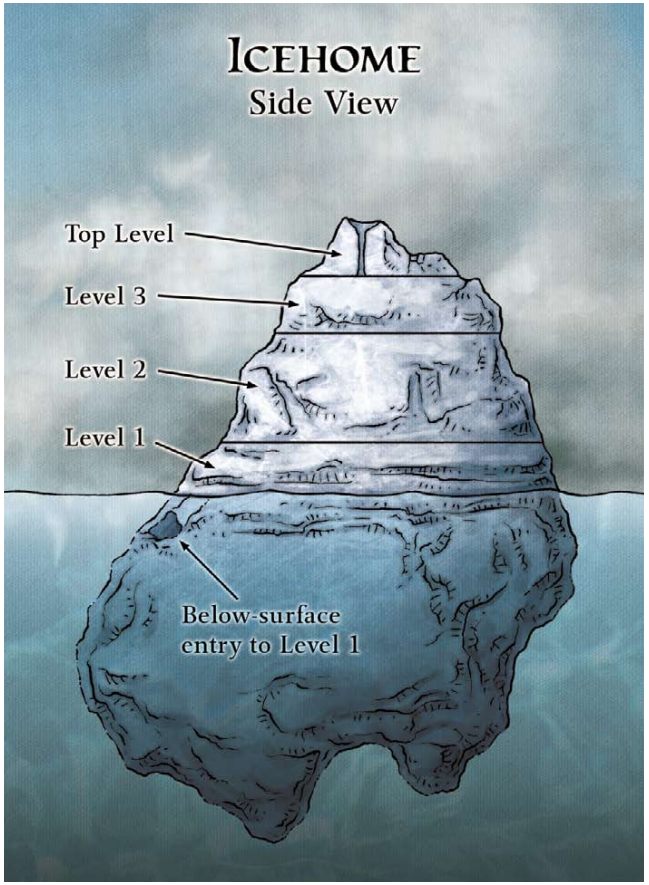
The top level is Chillreaver's lair and is the most refined of the three levels. Chillreaver has begun the process of shaping the ice into a grand fortress for

himself, and his ice gargoyle creations wait patiently for his instructions in the entry hall. The dragon's main chamber is where he keeps the *Seed of Winter*, and he attends to it regularly, guiding its power with his will. In Chillreaver's treasure room, a shaft leads out the top of Icehome, through the caldera.

Features of Icehome

The following features are common in Icehome.

Illumination: The inside of Icehome is illuminated by a strange soft glow emanating from the walls of the chambers. Unless otherwise noted, all areas are brightly lit. Underwater areas are dimly lit.



Walls and Floors: Since Icehome is constructed completely of ice, it stands to reason that traversing the ground might be a little hazardous. Thankfully, the lower two levels are spotted with snow and are easier to traverse. On these two levels, unless otherwise noted, the terrain is treated as normal terrain. The top level is slick, however, and creatures without ice walk (or another means of travel such as flying or teleporting) treat the terrain as difficult terrain and are moved 1 extra square when subjected to forced movement.

Using Ice Shoes: If a PC is wearing ice shoes (either given to them by Bejam or found in Icehome), it gives them -1 speed, but they are considered to have ice walk.

Stalagmites: Many stalagmites are on the two lower levels of Icehome; these are treated as blocking terrain, but creatures can cut the corners while moving around them.

Frigid Cold: Icehome's interior and exterior is considered an area of cold weather. Every 8 hours a PC is in Icehome without resistance to cold, the PC must succeed on a DC 22 Endurance check or lose a healing surge. If the PC has no healing surges left when the check is failed, the PC loses hit points equal to the character's level. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, pages 158–159 for more information.

Extended Rests

Taking extended rests at the wrong place in Icehome is difficult. In addition, should Chillreaver's forces go on alert, the situation becomes dicey for the PCs. Also, the PCs need to consider an element of time—they have less than 24 hours to stop Chillreaver before Nefelus's magical defenses fall and the island is assaulted by the climate change.

Investigating Icehome's Exterior

If the PCs decide to investigate the surface of Icehome instead of going inside the undersea entrance, they find an intact Nefelese sailing vessel pulled partially ashore. If they go aboard, it is clear that the ship has been ransacked of all valuables, and there appears to have been a bloody battle, although no crew remains. The ship is otherwise in sailing condition, and with a crew of four, can be readied quickly to depart.

A DC 23 Perception check outside the ship reveals webbed tracks leading back to the sea and drag marks spotted here and there with blood. Uarion's tracks up the side of the iceberg have long since been concealed by the wind and snow.

If the PCs tarry too long here, they might encounter a frost giant patrol consisting of three frost giant scouts and a frost giant (a level 14 encounter worth 4,600 XP).

However, the PCs do have a few options. First, the Solace Bole ritual should allow the PCs to disappear from the area, rest up, and return with only 1 hour passed. This can be absolutely critical when used at the right time, since it gives the party an extended rest on demand.

The other option to resolve a more mundane, 6-hour extended rest is to clear a level of Icehome and then camp in the cleared level. Most of the creatures don't journey into the levels below where they normally live, so the party should be relatively safe if the denizens of Icehome aren't actively looking for the PCs.

If the PCs are careful enough, they could have two extended rests within the 24-hour time frame, thanks to the ritual. This should be sufficient for groups that manage their resources effectively.

1. Entrance Cavern

This area is where the arctic sahuagin guards and raiders congregate. The undersea entrance opens up here onto the icy cavern floor. To the southeast, a water-filled tunnel flows into Xurgelmek's chamber.

Tactical Encounter: I1. Entrance Cavern (page 24).

2. Behir Lair

Natural stairs ascend up into this expansive cavern. The floor here is dotted with stalagmites, as with other areas of this level. Two ledges, one to the east and the other to the south, connect with Xurgelmek's chamber and rise 10 feet from the floor. The sahuagin keep an icetouched behir that frost giants brought recently. The icetouched behir has been affected by the *Seed of Winter*, and it has been kept happy by a steady diet of Nefelese from their last failed attempt to investigate Icehome, but it grows hungry again.

Tactical Encounter: I2. Behir Lair (page 26).

3. Xurgelmek's Chamber

The leader of the arctic sahuagin, a baron named Xurgelmek, dwells in the western half of this chamber. A 20-foot high ledge splits the chamber in half, and a beholder eye of frost dwells in the other half of the chamber, keeping guard on the shaft leading up to the second level and where the frost giants dwell.

Tactical Encounter: I3. Xurgelmek's Chamber (page 28).

4. Elemental Farm

An eerie glow bounces off the stalagmites in this room. To the west, a pair of ledges rises up to give a commanding view of the room. Chillreaver enjoys projects, and several of the stalagmites in this room are cocoons for servitor elementals that are waiting to be activated. Uarion, the missing githzerai mindmage, has also fallen under the sway of Chillreaver and the *Seed*, and they are here, as well. Uarian has oversight of the elementals. The chamber exits in a tunnel to the north.

Tactical Encounter: I4. Uarion's Fate (page 31).

5. Umber Hulk Lair

The defining feature of this chamber is the crevasse splitting the ice in the center of the room. More stalagmites dot the floor, and a newly excavated tunnel in the southeast region of the chamber leads to the frost giant enclave. Another tunnel leads to the north, but it is partially blocked by a massive stalagmite.

Tactical Encounter: I5. Icy Sappers (page 34).

6. Frost Giant Enclave

This massive chamber is the home of the frost giants. A slippery ice bridge rises to the grand hall on the next level, and a cold stream pools up near a natural staircase on the far side of the ice platform, nearly cutting the room in two. Unlike the other chambers on this level, the whole of the floor is devoid of stalagmites. Nara of the Wastes keeps her retinue here, and they use their linked portal to travel back to their northern home when necessary.

Tactical Encounter: I6. Frost Giant Enclave (page 35).

7. Grand Hall

Chillreaver's refinements start to show in this room, since it appears to be constructed with precision rather than crudely or naturally shaped. The room contains six ice pillars that lead into the main chamber, where a number of ice gargoyles stay motionless and await the commands of their master or unauthorized visitors. A secret door to the south leads to the treasure chamber, and to the east an illusory sliding ice wall provides access to Chillreaver's main chamber.

Tactical Encounter: I7. Gargoyles in the Hall (page 38).

8. Chillreaver's Chamber

This impressive chamber is dominated by a pedestal that rises 50 feet from the floor. On top of the pedestal is the *Seed of Winter*, glowing with the cold beams of the ten *silver mirrors* set into alcoves along the north and south sides of the top level walkway. Along the eastern wall is a massive dais inscribed with runes of power that Chillreaver uses to augment the effects of the *Seed of Winter*. To the south, a secret door allows access to the treasure chamber.

Tactical Encounter: I8. Chillreaver's Seed (page 40).

9. Treasure Chamber

Accessible only through secret entrances to the north and west, this chamber has a platform 30 feet above the floor that cuts the room in two. Icy pillars mark the boundary of the platform and the floor below. On the platform is Chillreaver's treasure hoard, as well as an exit shaft leading out of Icehome to the top of the iceberg.

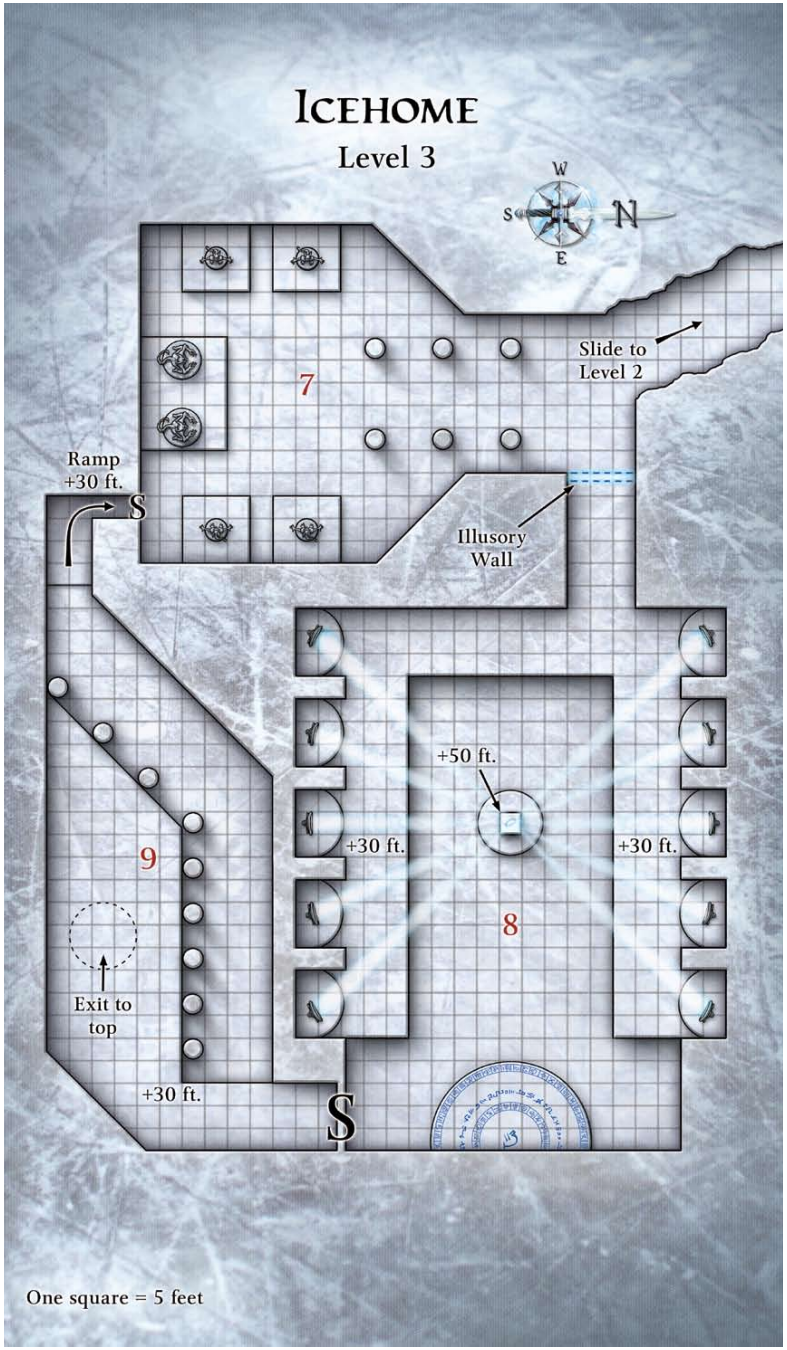
Illumination: This area is brightly lit.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 60 feet from the lower floor.

Floor: The floor here is treated as difficult terrain for anyone moving on it without ice walk. In addition, creatures without ice walk standing on the floor are moved 1 additional square when subjected to forced movement.

Platform: Roughly half of the room is 30 feet above the lower floor. On this platform are the interesting baubles and spoils of Chillreaver's conquests (his treasure parcels are found here).

Exit Shaft: This smooth ice shaft is 15 feet in diameter and heads out the top of Icehome (see "Escape from Icehome" for more information). It requires a DC 30 Athletics check to climb up it. After 40 feet, the terrain becomes a bit easier to climb since it gradually slopes upward for another 40 feet (DC 10 Athletics check to climb) before again becoming a 50-foot sheer climb to the top of the rim (DC 25 Athletics check to climb).



Escape from Icehome

Upon significantly reducing the *Seed of Winter's* power, the magic energy sustaining Icehome begins to unravel and the structure starts to collapse. The PCs must move away from the iceberg before it completely collapses!

When the PCs disable the *Seed of Winter* trap, read:

The Seed of Winter is knocked free of its position on the pedestal. A crackling blast of white frost resonates out from the Seed, through the room, and beyond.

After 5 more combat rounds (if necessary), read:

The floor begins to vibrate as a rumbling sound is getting increasingly louder. That noise is soon overtaken by a deafening "Crack!" You soon come to the conclusion that the iceberg is crumbling apart!

The PCs must now participate in a skill challenge to escape from Icehome before it becomes their tomb. It doesn't matter which way they go—down to the undersea entrance to take off in the *apparatuses of Kwalish* or up to the top of the iceberg to make their way back down to the shore and the last Nefelese vessel out (see "Investigating Icehome's Exterior" on page 13 for more information about the Nefelese ship).

If the PCs are still engaged in combat with Chillreaver, it might make for an exciting finale to weave the skill challenge as the characters escape the crumbling iceberg in with the battle.

Skill Challenge: SC2. Escape from Icehome (page 43).

Return to Nefelus

After the PCs escape from the destruction of Icehome, they can return back to Nefelus to report the details of their mission to Amyria and Bejam, and then they can attempt to convince the Thraxus to become part of the Coalition.

With the defeat of Chillreaver and the destruction of his iceberg lair, the weather begins to warm. As you approach the island nation, the icy ring has already begun to crack and break into swiftly melting floes of ice.

After the PCs dock their vessel, they are taken back to the Great Library to meet once again with Amyria and Bejam. The PCs can relay what has occurred on the iceberg.

If the PCs brought back the githzerai mindmage Uarion, Bejam is thankful for his return, and promises to have their best priests tend to him.

If the PCs return with the *Seed of Winter*, Bejam asks to have the Thraxinium study it before handing it back to them.

If the PCs mention the silver mirrors used to augment the power of the *Seed of Winter*:

Bejam looks concerned at this news. "Ten, you say? We are still missing a few more, and if their magic can be perverted to power a fell artifact, who knows for what else the mirrors have been appropriated."

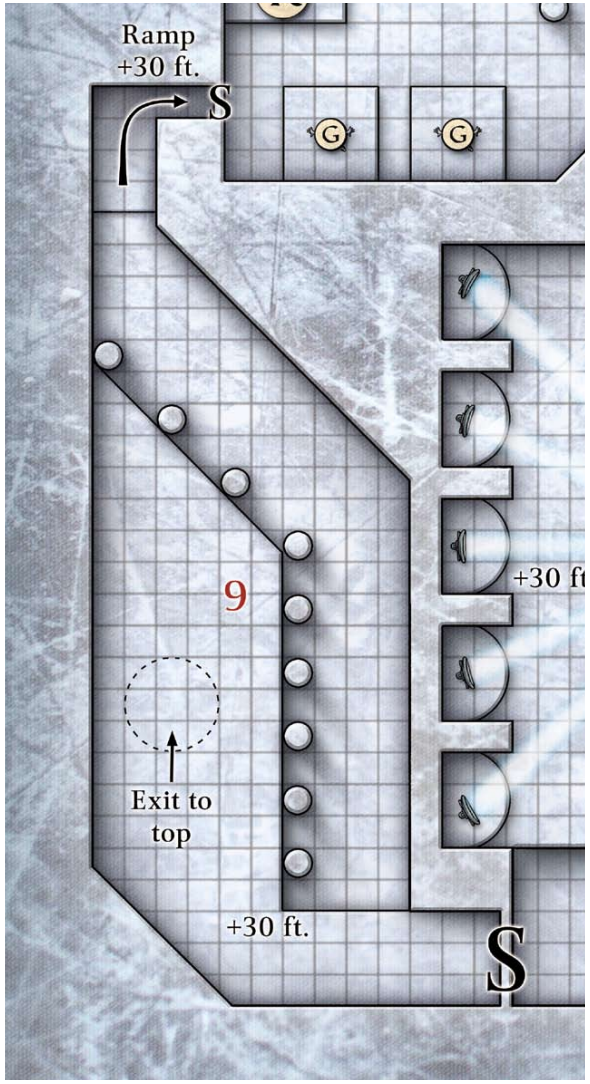
When the PCs are finished telling their story, read:

"Our gratitude runs deep for what you've done today. We will reward you handsomely for your efforts, and you can be sure that Nefelus will provide aid to your cause on the mainland. Would there be anything else you'd ask of us?"

You catch Amyria's eye as Bejam awaits your answer.

If the PCs decide to take Amyria's cue, they might ask Bejam to personally join the Coalition on behalf of his nation.

Skill Challenge: SC3. Convincing Bejam (page 44).



Concluding the Adventure

The PCs have defeated Chillreaver and saved the island nation of Nefelus from a great disaster. In so doing, the Nefelese have decided to end their isolation and are sending both magical and naval aid to the Coalition. If they were convincing enough, the PCs might have persuaded Bejam, one of the Thraxinium of Nefelus, to personally join the Coalition to give his people a voice in the fight against the githyanki threat.

After a few days of rest in the tropical island weather, Amyria and Bejam are ready to return to the mainland and to the Coalition. Amyria speaks little of her recently discovered past with the Nefelese. As promised, the *Seed of Winter* is returned to the PCs, who are told that it is vitally important that one of them hold on to it until its true purpose becomes known. They can relate the story of the *Seed of Winter* from their research (see Appendix 2 for more information). Uarion is nursed back to health, since the changes wrought by Chillreaver and the *Seed* fade within hours of his return to Nefelus.

Read the following at the conclusion of the adventure, which leads the PCs into the next installment of the Scales of War adventure path, "Throne of the Stone-Skinned King."

As you assemble at the dock in Nefelus, Bejam gives his regards to his assembled family and friends. While Bejam is distracted with his goodbyes, Amyria leans in to speak with you in a troubled tone.

"I have just received a message from Fariex. He is brief, since he communicated by using a Sending ritual. The Coalition has suffered great losses. They are in chaos and in dire need of new leadership. We must return immediately."

What Have the PCs Learned?

At the conclusion of "Alliance at Nefelus," the PCs should learn the following information.

- The isolationist island of Nefelus, known for its vast stores of ancient knowledge and formidable navy, has decided to aid the Coalition.
- Bejam, a deva spellcaster and member of the magocracy that governs Nefelus, has (most likely) decided to accept a seat on the Coalition.
- The PCs have recovered an artifact known as the *Seed of Winter* from a two-headed white dragon known as Chillreaver. The artifact was given to Chillreaver by a fomorian king from the Feywild named Cachlain.
- Many silver mirrors that were placed all around the world and used as communication devices by the Nefelese have gone missing. Some turned up in Chillreaver's lair, having been repurposed for augmenting the *Seed*. Many more are still missing.
- Members of the Coalition have been attacked and possibly slain, and the council is falling into chaos. The Coalition is looking for a new leader.

H1: Blockade Run

Encounter Level 18 (10,800 XP)

Setup

1 Amyria, Envoy to Nefelus (A)
5 frost giant scouts (S)
3 frost giants (F)

As the ship *Brindol's Pride* closes in on the icy ring to break through the frozen blockade, a frost giant patrol attacks the PCs and possibly the ship.

As *Brindol's Pride* approaches the ice ring, read:

Several frost giants take form out of the freezing fog. Some wield enormous frozen greataxes and others draw back frosty bows with ice arrows. They are positioned on the ice ring, where they are preparing to attack, while the ship continues to move toward the ice at ramming speed!

The PCs are on the deck of the ship when combat begins, along with Amyria. Make sure to roll initiative for Amyria along with the PCs, since she leaps into the fray to fight the giants as well. You might wish to make a copy of Amyria's stat block and hand it to one of the more experienced players to control her for this fight, or if a PC falls unconscious, allow that player to play her until his or her character is back in the action.

Development

Roll initiative for the ship and add a +2 modifier. When it comes to the ship's initiative, the ship moves straight forward until it reaches the ice ring, and then slams into the ice. Make an attack at +18 vs. Fortitude against all characters standing on the deck of the ship when it rams the ice ring. On a hit, the target is knocked prone.

On each subsequent turn, the ship breaks through part of the ice ring. Move the ship forward 1 square. Once it is completely free of the ice ring (no ship squares are in the squares that were occupied by the ice ring), it continues forward at a speed of 6 squares. The PCs might need to head back on the ship at that point if they have disembarked to fight.

Tactics

Unless played by another player, Amyria readies an action to jump off the ship and charge the nearest giant when the ship contacts the ice ring. She attempts to rally the PCs close enough to her to affect them with *crusader's assault* and the *aura of recovery*.

The frost giant scouts attempt to keep the PCs at range, and they open up with their *chillshards* if they can affect multiple PCs on the ship. They continue to move and shoot with *icy arrows*, and they even consider jumping onto an ice floe if it gives them a tactical advantage. When the last of the scouts becomes bloodied, he attempts to flee the combat, running along the ice ring back toward Icehome (which is about 2 miles from this area).

The frost giants attack any PCs that come close enough to them; if they have no real options, they start attacking the ship with their greataxes. They use their handaxes only if there's no other option that presents itself. Unlike the scouts, the frost giants fight to the finish.

Amyria (A) **Level 14 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium immortal humanoid XP 2,000

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +12
Aura of Recovery aura 3; allies that start their turn in Amyria's aura gain a +2 bonus to all saves until the start of their next turn.
HP 252; **Bloodied** 126
AC 30; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 28
Resist 10 radiant
Saving Throws +2
Speed 8
Action Points 1

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
+21 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Amyria's next turn. While so marked, if the target doesn't attack Amyria, the target takes 7 radiant damage.

⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
Amyria makes two longsword attacks.

⸸ **Crusader's Assault** (standard; requires longsword; at-will) ✦ **Radiant, Weapon**
+21 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage plus 1d8 radiant damage, and one of Amyria's allies within 10 squares can make a basic attack as a free action against the same target.

✧ **Bahamut's Accusing Eye** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Radiant**
Ranged 10; +18 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 cold and radiant damage, and ongoing 5 cold and radiant damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).

Memory of a Thousand Lifetimes (free, when the Amyria makes an attack roll, a skill check, or an ability check and dislikes the result; encounter)
Amyria adds 1d6 to the triggering roll.

Alignment Lawful good **Languages** Common, Draconic, Supernal
Skills Diplomacy +15, Religion +17

Str 10 (+7)	**Dex** 12 (+8)	**Wis** 21 (+12)
Con 12 (+8)	**Int** 18 (+11)	**Cha** 16 (+10)

Equipment plate armor, longsword

Features of the Area

Illumination: The fog provides concealment to targets 10 squares or farther away.

Ice Ring: The ring has enough snow on top to provide traction, and it is treated as normal terrain.

Ice Floes: A number of ice floes are present in the water near the ship and the ice ring. These are all a bit slippery and are treated as difficult terrain. A creature subject to forced movement while on an ice floe is moved an additional square. Creatures with ice walk ignore the difficult terrain and additional forced movement.

Brindol's Pride: The ship has a crew of 12 besides Amyria and the PCs, 300 hit points, a swim speed of 6 squares, AC and Reflex defenses of 2, and a Fortitude defense of 30. If the ship drops to 0 hit points, its hull is breached and it starts to sink. Its movement is reduced to 0, and it sinks into the sea in 3 rounds. The PCs might need to think quickly to save the crew and they have to swim one mile in freezing cold water (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 159, to see how characters are affected by frigid cold) to the port of Nefelus before they are rescued.

Aftermath

Keep in mind to divide the XP share by an extra participant due to Amyria's assistance in the combat. So, if you have five PCs, you should award each PC one-sixth of a share instead of one-fifth.

When the encounter is finished and the ship has broken through the ice ring, go to "Welcome to Nefelus" on page10.

5 Frost Giant Scouts (S) **Level 15 Artillery**
Large elemental humanoid (cold, giant) XP 1,200 each

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +17
HP 115; **Bloodied** 57
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27
Resist 15 cold
Speed 9 (ice walk)

Icy Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 cold damage.

Icy Arrow (standard; requires longbow; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +22 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn.

Chillshards (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Area burst 1 within 20; +20 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 8 cold damage, and the target is slowed and cannot take immediate or opportunity actions until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn.

Tundra Hunter (standard; recharges when first bloodied)
The frost giant makes a melee or ranged attack. If the attack hits, the target gains vulnerable 10 cold (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target gains vulnerable 5 cold (save ends).

Quick Release
The frost giant scout does not provoke opportunity attacks when it makes ranged or area attacks.

Icebound Footing
When an effect pulls, pushes, or slides a frost giant, the giant moves 2 squares less than the effect specifies. Also, a frost giant can make a saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +16, Stealth +18
Str 19 (+11) **Dex** 23 (+13) **Wis** 20 (+12)
Con 19 (+11) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+7)
Equipment hide armor, spear, longbow, 40 arrows

3 Frost Giants (F) **Level 17 Brute**
Large elemental humanoid (cold, giant) XP 1,600 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +13
HP 201; **Bloodied** 100; see also *dying swipe*
AC 29; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 28
Resist 15 cold
Speed 8 (ice walk)

Icy Greataxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 4d6 + 7 (crit 8d6 + 31) cold damage.

Dying Swipe (when the frost giant drops to 0 hit points)
The frost giant makes an *icy greataxe* attack.

Chilling Strike (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 cold damage, and the target gains vulnerable 10 cold (save ends).

Icy Handaxe (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Ranged 5/10; +20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 cold damage.

Icebound Footing
When an effect pulls, pushes, or slides a frost giant, the giant moves 2 squares less than the effect specifies. Also, a frost giant can make a saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +19
Str 23 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 20 (+13)
Con 21 (+13) **Int** 10 (+8) **Cha** 12 (+9)
Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 3 handaxes

Meeting Bejam

Roleplaying Encounter
Encounter Level 14

Running this Encounter

The PCs disembark at the port, and they are led up the cliffside walkways and through the crowded city streets to the Great Library, where they are given the opportunity to rest and then meet with Bejam, a member of the Thraxinium.

Play up the sights of Nefelus. This is a city unlike others the PCs have likely visited. The Nefelese are powerful mages and use their knowledge to enhance their city in many ways. The closest comparison is Sayre, in the PCs' experience, but even that city of sages and artists pales in comparison to Nefelus.

Once the ship is docked, you leave the mundane tasks to the crew and depart with Amyria into the wondrous city of Nefelus. Scaling up the sides of a verdant cliff dotted with buildings that smell like fish and the salty spray of the sea, you reach the top and are nearly lost in the crowded, busied masses of people moving about. Even in the midday sun, the crowds move rapidly this way and that, but they always appear to be aware of your presence and never bump or brush up against you.

You continue to make your way through the wooded streets, rife with the sounds of conversation, the chatter of tropical birds, and the constant whispering of the breeze through the exotic trees. After navigating through this urban maze for well over two hours, the entrance to the Great Library is before you. All you need do now is climb the hundreds of stairs to the domed complex's yawning gate.

Amyria looks to you and says, "Here we are. We're to meet one of their council in the entry hall. His name's Bejam. Let's go upstairs and see if we can ask around for him."

When the PCs head up the stairs and go inside the Great Library, read:

A great entry hall stretches on for what seems like hundreds of feet. Each direction is dotted with multiple hallways and doors leading farther into the complex. Above, you can see the beautiful blue sky streaming through the glass dome, but you're certain that from the outside, the dome looked like it was crafted out of wood. In the center of the hall, a hundred-foot-high orrery depicting the planes and the world gleams in the sun. The surfaces in the orrery's universe shift and move, as though alive with activity.

Just as you come to the realization that the stifling, humid air has abated, a male deva dressed in a shimmering blue-violet robe with small platinum wings adorning his back approaches you. He smiles at your retinue and says, "Welcome to Nefelus, our most honored guests. I am Bejam, Sixth Thraxus and Keeper of the Mirrors. It is good to see that you arrived without much delay. Amyria, I will take you before the Thraxinium to discuss the specifics of our situation. As for your retinue, I will have an attendant escort them to a waiting room where they can rest. I am certain we will have need of their expertise soon enough."

What Bejam Knows

The PCs do not get to meet with Bejam immediately. Following protocol, he wants a meeting with Amyria first. After his initial introduction, Bejam motions to another deva in the chamber, and exits with Amyria, leaving the PCs to be escorted to a well-appointed sitting room where they can rest. They are told by the attendant that it will be some time, and they should rest if they can (the PCs can take an extended rest here if they so desire).

If the PCs try to discuss matters with Bejam before he has had a chance to bring Amyria to the council, he tells them that they might ask their questions after they return from their meeting. Bejam and Amyria return after 6 hours.

After a long wait and numerous inquiries as to your food and beverage preferences by the attendant, Amyria and Bejam arrive in your sitting room.

Amyria speaks. "After long discourse and debate, I have talked on behalf of the Coalition and we've entered an arrangement with the Thraxinium. If you assist Nefelus in shedding its problem, they have agreed to at least support the Coalition with material and knowledge. My friends, I must ask you to once again imperil yourselves for the good of our cause. I will let Bejam give you the details that have recently become known to me." Amyria nods at Bejam and exits the room as the Thraxus begins to brief you.

Bejam does not spend time rehashing what the characters already know about the situation. He imparts the following information to the PCs. Impart this information conversationally so the players feel like they're asking the right questions to receive these answers.

Through the Thraxinium's research, the heart of this problem appears to bear the mark of an artifact known as the Seed of Winter. When properly harnessed by a creature attuned to it, the artifact can cause drastic localized climate changes and can even alter creatures that come in contact with it or are near it. However, we think what's happening to Nefelus goes beyond the normal power of the artifact; someone or something must be augmenting it in some way.

The Seed of Winter was thought lost to the Feywild centuries ago, but it has apparently made its way back into the world.

The Thraxinium knows through divinations and other more mundane observations that the iceberg that appeared out in the sea is the source of the emanations.

Just before the ice ring completely blockaded our ships, we sent out three ships to investigate the iceberg and attempt to deal with the problem. We monitored their progress, and two of the three ships were attacked and destroyed by sahuagin with ice-blue skin. They appeared tougher than normal sahuagin and had an affinity for the cold. The last ship limped to the shore of the iceberg and was under assault by frost giants there; we saw only one survivor make it away from the vessel—a githzerai mentalist named Uarion. We have not heard from him since.

Uarion has been with us for several decades; he is the only githzerai in the city, but he proves his worth to Nefelus time and time again through his mastery of the powers of the mind. He soaks up knowledge like a sponge, and he is probably the most accomplished nondeva ritualist in Nefelus. It would be a shame if he was lost to the power of the Seed.

(Bejam gives the PCs a description of Uarion.)

If the PCs ask him about his title as the Keeper of Mirrors:

I am the caretaker of our network of our silver mirrors, which are communication devices that we have planted throughout the world to keep informed of what's happening on the mainland. We currently set the communication to receive only images and speech, so our observations remain unnoticed. To the untrained eye, a silver mirror can appear as a large mundane item, so its presence is easy enough to conceal. Over the past few months, however, we have noticed that many of our silver mirrors out in the world have gone missing, and until this crisis reared its head, it was my primary concern.

The PCs might also ask Bejam about glass or mirrored communication devices based on their experiences in "Haven of the Bitter Glass." Bejam can confirm that some githyanki "burglars," as he calls them, a mere six months prior. The Thraxi, however, isn't willing to hastily assume those githyanki were tied to the invaders, although pointing out the timing of the attack gets Bejam thinking, and gives the PCs a benefit in the skill challenge to convince the deva to join the Coalition (see page 44).

Once the PCs have finished asking Bejam questions, read:

After having finished your briefing, Bejam concludes his talk with you and says, "We need your assistance to stop the climate change from overwhelming our island and to break the blockade. From the estimates made by the Thraxinium, we have about a day before our ritualists can no longer sustain the magic holding back the freezing weather. Once the ritual gives way, the island's climate will be forever altered and many creatures here will die. Nefelus will suffer a corruption the likes of which we have not been threatened with for hundreds of years. I implore you to journey to the iceberg and end this assault on our way of life. If you can bring back the Seed of Winter for study and find out the fate of Uarion, all the better. Amyria says she has not met any more accomplished at dangerous tasks than you. Will you assist us?"

SC1: Traveling to Icehome

Encounter Level 14 (3,000 XP)

Setup

Once the PCs begin the journey to Icehome, it takes about 3 hours, and if the characters aren't careful, they might encounter arctic sahuagin along the way.

Traveling to Icehome **Level 14**
Skill Challenge XP 3,000

You must use the strange craft provided by the Nefelese to traverse the depths to the iceberg, all the while attempting to avoid detection.

The PCs leave the safety of Nefelus, journey under the surface of the sea, navigate under the ice ring blockade, avoid sahuagin patrols, and find the undersea entrance to Icehome.

Complexity

3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills

Arcana, History, Nature, Perception

Victory

The PCs make their way to the undersea entrance of Icehome and encounter I1 Entrance Cavern (see page 24).

Defeat

The PCs make it there, but not without strain on the *apparatuses*. The systems malfunction on the vehicles, and they lose environmental control inside. Each PC loses 1 healing surge and the devices are rendered useless for returning to Nefelus. They will need to find another way back.

Special

There are three *apparatuses*, so take turns by craft. If two characters are in the craft, let the crew decide to roll one, one with an assist, or two skill checks before going back to the craft again. Only crew of the same craft can assist each other's skill checks.

Arcana

DC 18 If the PC succeeds by 10 or more, he or she fully understands the mechanisms for operating the claws and receives a +2 bonus to attack rolls when using *rending claws*.

The PC effectively operates the vehicle's levers and coaxes better performance out of the craft.

History

DC 23 The next Arcana check made in this craft receives a +2 bonus.

The PC recalls hearing tales of Kwalish's devices and remembers a common quirk present in all of them that makes them easier to operate.

Nature

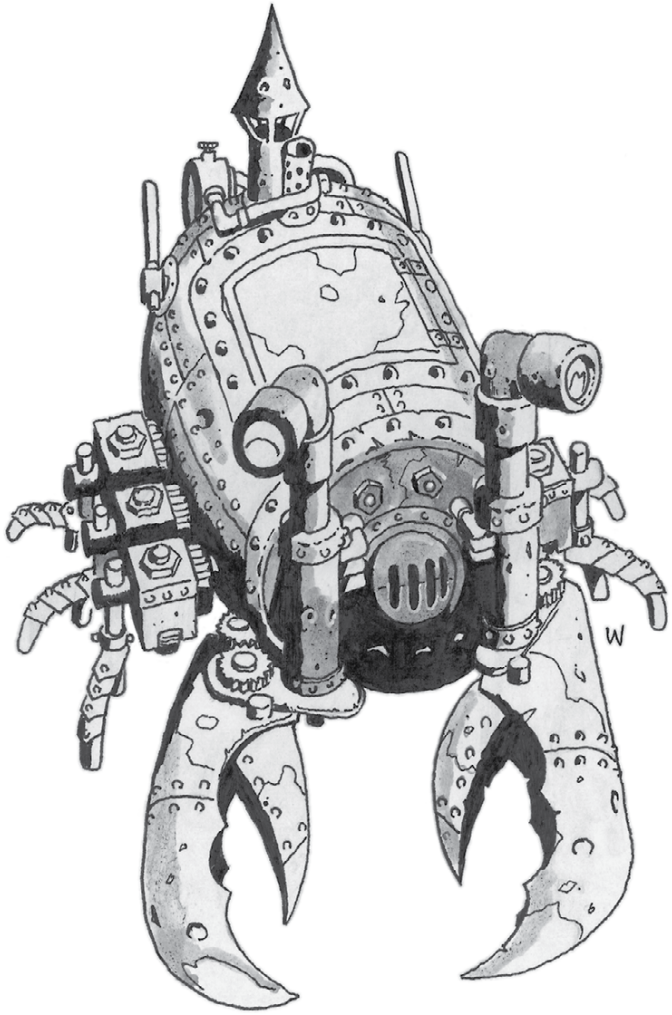
DC 18 If the PC succeeds by 10 or more, and the overall skill challenge result is victory, he or she finds a swifter route to Icehome that all the craft take, shaving an hour off of their time. This allows the PCs to preserve enough air in the craft for a return journey and means they can leave the *apparatuses* sealed.

The PC navigates around the ice ring and uses the current to the vehicle's advantage.

Perception

DC 11 Every failure on this check means the PCs have an encounter with three arctic sahuagin guards while in the submersibles (see Appendix 1 for statistics). After 3 rounds of combat, any remaining guards flee the area to return to Icehome and warn the other sahuagin of their approach.

The PC keeps a sharp eye out for arctic sahuagin, avoiding them where possible.



11: Entrance Cavern

Encounter Level 12 (3,950 XP)

Setup

5 arctic sahuagin guards (G)
4 arctic sahuagin raiders (R)
1 arctic sahuagin priest (P)

Unless the characters take their *apparatuses* to the surface and explore the exterior, they end up spotting the undersea entrance to Icehome, and they have to fight their way past the arctic sahuagin that guard this area.

Once the PCs complete the "Traveling to Icehome" skill challenge, read:

You propel your craft through the depths, and a massive shadow starts to take form in the water ahead. You see the underbelly of a massive iceberg—you've just about reached your destination.

Upon nearing the iceberg, you see a hole in it that indicates an underwater tunnel. As you maneuver your craft through the narrow passage in a single file, the tunnel starts to climb. Eventually, a pale blue light surrounds you, and you realize that you're just about to surface. Chunks of ice bob near your craft as you bring them up for air.

Have the players place three 2-by-2 markers down in any open water spaces on the map to represent where the *apparatuses of Kwalish* surface.

As you bring the craft to the surface, you see that you're in an ice cavern dotted with stalactites and snow. A number of blue-skinned sahuagin appear more than happy to greet you in the traditional customs of their people as they threaten you with their weapons.

Development

The PCs are still inside the apparatuses when combat begins. It takes a minor action from one PC to open the hatch for the vehicle. The PCs can stay inside the craft and use its rending claws to attack the sahuagin, but the sahuagin quickly figure out this tactic and attempt to stay out of reach.

If the sahuagin were warned of the PCs' approach (possibly by accumulating failures in the skill challenge), they are ready for them and gain combat advantage during the first round of combat. Otherwise, determine initiative normally.

Tactics

The arctic sahuagin guards throw their ice tridents once the battle is joined. They have a stash of ice tridents in the northwest corner of the room, and they can retrieve another one if necessary. Once they've thrown one trident and retrieved another, they gang up on one PC and engage in melee.

The arctic sahuagin raiders double-team a PC if possible, even going out into the water to meet them where their craft is located. They prefer to attack softer targets first, such as ranged attackers and controllers. They take directions from the priest and do not withdraw unless ordered to do so.

The arctic sahuagin priest begins the battle by targeting a defender or other tough-looking melee character with *freezing bolt*, especially if the target is still away from the shore, in an attempt to slow the advance. Once a suitable striker-type target is available, the priest uses *arctic jaws* on the PC and orders the guards to gang up on that target.

The priest calls for a retreat to the behir lair only when he becomes bloodied, and it does not head to Xurgelmek for fear of reprisal.

4 Arctic Sahuagin Raiders (R)	**Level 11 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 600 each
Initiative +11	**Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 112; **Bloodied** 56	
AC 27; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22	
Resist 10 cold	
Speed 5 (7 on a charge, ice walk), swim 5 (7 on a charge)	
⊕ **Trident** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
+18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 (1d8 + 7 to a bloodied target) damage plus 1d8 cold damage, and the target is marked until the end of the arctic sahuagin raider's next turn.	
↛ **Trident** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 10/20; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 (2d6 + 7 to a bloodied target) damage.	
↓ **Opportunistic Strike** (immediate reaction, when a flanked enemy shifts; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
The arctic sahuagin raider makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.	
↓ **Sliding Strike** (immediate interrupt, when a marked enemy makes an attack that doesn't include the arctic sahuagin raider; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
The arctic sahuagin raider shifts 7 squares adjacent to the triggering enemy, and makes a melee basic attack against that enemy.	
Blood Frenzy	
The arctic sahuagin raider gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Abyssal
Str 20 (+10)	**Dex** 14 (+7)	**Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 14 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+5)	**Cha** 10 (+5)
Equipment 2 tridents	

Arctic Sahuagin Priest (P) **Level 13 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 800

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 101; **Bloodied** 50
AC 25; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26
Resist 10 cold
Speed 5 (7 during a double move, ice walk), swim 5 (7 during a double move)

⊕ **Longspear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +17 (+18 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 (1d10 + 6 to a bloodied target) damage plus 1d8 cold damage, and the target slides 1 square.

↗ **Freezing Bolt** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 (2d6 + 8 to a bloodied target) cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the arctic sahuagin priest's next turn.

↗ **Arctic Jaws** (standard; recharges when no target is affected by this power) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 20; icy shark jaws appear and bite the target; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 (2d6 + 8 to a bloodied target) cold damage, and target gains vulnerable 5 cold and is slowed (save ends both).

Blood Frenzy
The arctic sahuagin priest gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +15
Str 16 (+9) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 20 (+11)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment trident, holy symbol, frozen kelp robe

5 Arctic Sahuagin Guards (G) **Level 11 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 150 each

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 27; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22
Immune cold
Speed 5 (7 on a charge, ice walk), swim 5 (7 on a charge)

⊕ **Trident** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 7 damage (9 damage to a bloodied target), and the target is marked until the end of the arctic sahuagin guard's next turn.

↗ **Javelin** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 7 damage (9 damage to a bloodied target).

Blood Frenzy
The arctic sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Str 16 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Equipment trident, 3 javelins

12: Behir Lair

Encounter Level 14 (5,000 XP)

Setup

1 icetouched behir (B)

Once the PCs come ashore in the ice cavern and fight their way through the first group of arctic sahuagin, they can proceed up the natural stairs into a large chamber that houses a pet of the sahuagin—an ice-touched behir that they've been keeping well-fed with the recently dead sailors from the Nefelese vessels.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

Ascending the natural stairs in the cave complex, you enter a large cavern dotted with stalagmites here and there. A ledge, about 10 feet off the ground, is ahead of you. The climb looks a bit slick. Farther past that ledge to the extreme south of the cavern, another ledge offers a similar climb. A tunnel heads farther south.

Perception Check
DC 16: *You can see that there's something moving behind one of the stalagmites near you . . . something big.*

The icetouched behir is resting behind one of the stalagmites, having recently finished off the last of the Nefelese sailors. PCs who succeed on the Perception check gain surprise against the creature (although unless they have a particularly good vantage point, the behir has cover).

Tactics

The icetouched behir attempts to *devour* a creature as soon as it can. In subsequent rounds, it attempts to use its *lightning breath* when enough targets present themselves to it. Otherwise, it alternates between its bite attack and *thunderleg stomp*. When it can, it uses its ability to climb to its advantage, scrambling up the side of one of the two ledges in the cavern.

The behir taunts its foes with stories of how it will enjoy picking them apart bone by bone like the sailors that it feasted on before. If it is about to die, it attempts to flee to Xurgelmek's chamber and up the ice shaft to the second level.

Development

If the PCs approach this encounter by heading up the southern stairs instead of the northern ones, they automatically see the icetouched behir and gain surprise against it. However, Xurgelmek and the arctic sahuagin raiders notice the characters after 1 round of combat and come to the behir's aid. The beholder does not leave its position in its chamber, since it guards the ice shaft to the second level.

Otherwise, after a few rounds of combat (whenever you think it appropriate), have one of the arctic sahuagin raiders move into the area to investigate the disturbance and join the battle. The other sahuagin stays in the area unless the raider calls for reinforcements (at your discretion).

Icetouched Behir (B)	**Level 14 Solo Soldier**
Huge natural magical beast	XP 5,000
Initiative +14	**Senses** Perception +12; tremorsense 10
HP 705; **Bloodied** 352	
AC 32; **Fortitude** 29, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 28	
Resist 10 cold, 10 lightning	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 7 (ice walk), climb 5	
Action Points 2	
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 3; +21 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage.	
⸸ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**	
Reach 3; +21 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage plus 1d8 lightning damage, and any creature within 3 squares of the target takes 1d8 lightning damage.	
⸸ **Devour** (standard; recharges when no creature is affected by this power)	
Reach 3; +19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is swallowed. While swallowed, the target is grabbed and restrained. A swallowed creature has line of sight and line of effect only to the icetouched behir, and no creature has line of sight or line of effect to it. A creature that escapes the grab is no longer swallowed and appears in a space adjacent to the icetouched behir. An icetouched behir can move normally while it has a target grabbed in this way. When the icetouched behir dies, the target is no longer swallowed and can escape as a move action, appearing in the icetouched behir's former space. *Sustain Minor:* The icetouched behir sustains the grab, and the target takes 15 damage.	
✧ **Lightning Breath** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Lightning**	
Close burst 1; +17 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 6 lightning damage. *Miss:* Half damage. *Effect:* The icetouched behir makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks, and the area of effect must not include the area of the primary attack: area burst 1 within 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 6 lightning damage. *Miss:* Half damage.	
✧ **Thunderleg Stomp** (standard; at-will)	
Close burst 3; +17 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common, Draconic
Str 23 (+13)	**Dex** 20 (+12)	**Wis** 21 (+12)
Con 21 (+12)	**Int** 7 (+5)	**Cha** 13 (+8)

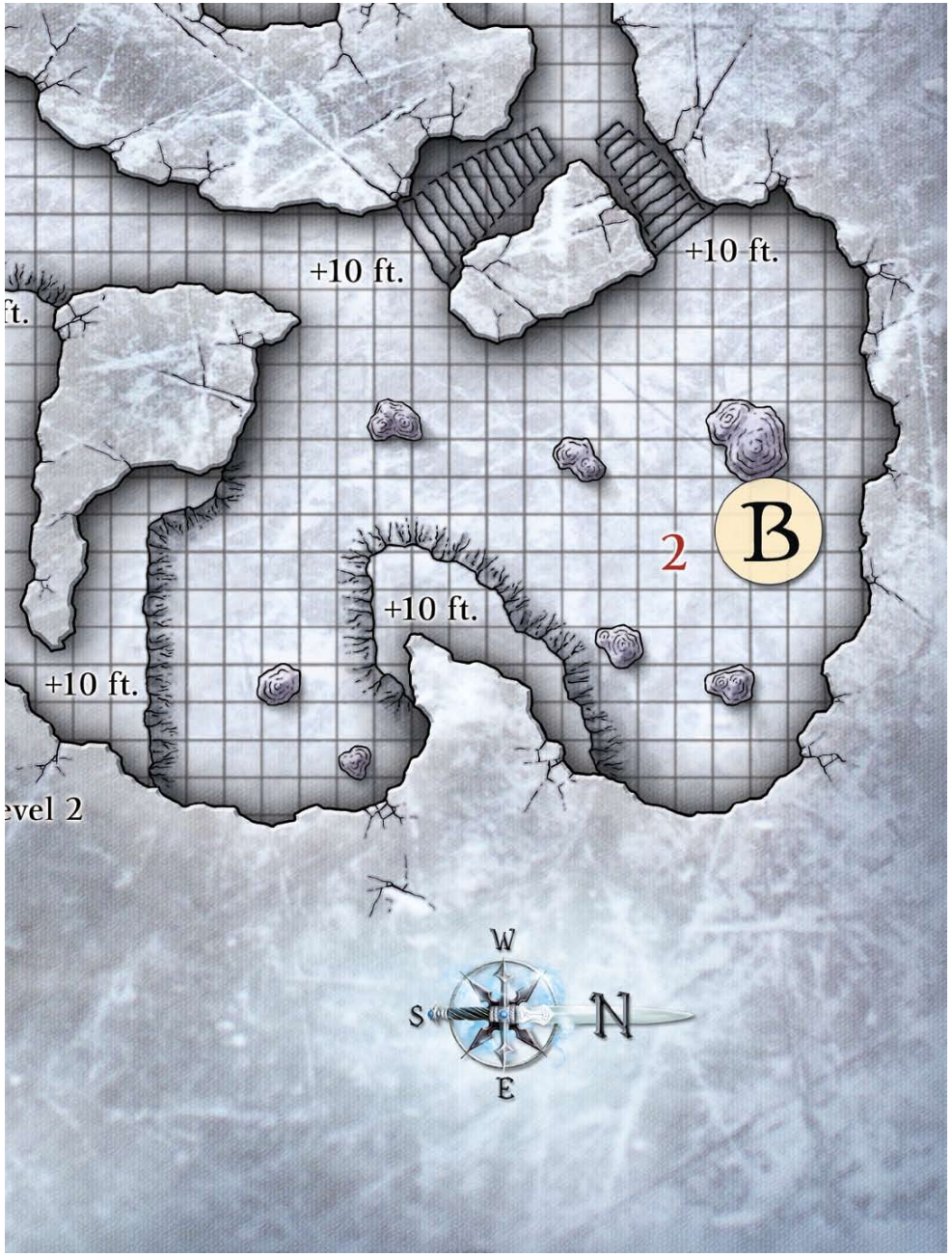
Features of the Area

Illumination: This area is brightly lit.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet from the floor.

Stalagmites: These are blocking terrain and provide cover. A creature can move around the corner of a stalagmite square normally.

Ledges: Two ledges are 10 feet above the floor of the area. They require a DC 20 Athletics check to climb. The ledge in the eastern end of the room contains the sailors' remaining gear, including several sets of spiked ice shoes that help traverse slippery terrain (see "Using Ice Shoes" on page 13).



13: Xurgelmek's Chamber

Encounter Level 14 (5,600 XP)

Setup

Xurgelmek, arctic sahuagin baron (X)
2 arctic sahuagin raiders (R)
1 beholder eye of frost (B)

Xurgelmek, the arctic sahuagin baron and leader of the first level's enclave, dwells here with a special guardian to watch over the entrance to the second level—a beholder eye of frost that frost giants brought back. It agreed to perform duties here in exchange for having first crack at enslaving some of the Nefelese when the land was conquered by Chillreaver.

Xurgelmek was the first creature changed by the *Seed of Winter* after Chillreaver arrived here, and he brought his sahuagin clan before the dragon to undergo the same transformation. As such, he believes that they are Chillreaver's most favored ones, since the dragon didn't bless the frost giants with the gift of the *Seed's* power.

Xurgelmek keeps the sahuagin here in line by fear, and to report failure to him is death. Since the other arctic sahuagin have not found much to do since becoming changed by the *Seed*, most of them spend time away from the ice caverns to hunt and raid the nearby lands.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

This room is divided in two by a ledge that rises 20 feet from the cavern floor. The lower elevation of the room sports more spearlike stalagmites and a pool of deep blue water at the room's southern edge.

Up on the higher elevation, a massive stalagmite partially obstructs a smooth shaft in the ceiling that is about 10 feet in diameter.

Tactics

Xurgelmek orders his raiders to engage the intruders at once, and follows right behind them, using the raiders as a buffer between himself and the PCs. He tries to engage a melee character to bring down the PCs' first line of defense. The baron uses his *bloodchill claw* against targets when possible, but if they show resistance to cold damage, he relies on his trident. He doesn't throw his trident unless it's absolutely necessary to do so.

The raiders harry a front-line character as well, possibly teaming up with the baron to bring down a defender quickly. They position themselves effectively to take advantage of *opportunistic strike* when possible.

Tell Us What You Know!

The beholder might be willing to strike an accord with the PCs in exchange for its own life, if the PCs succeed on a DC 34 Intimidate check while it is bloodied. The beholder can provide the PCs with its purpose for being here, information on where the githzerai Uarion is located (although it doesn't know his fate), and knowledge of the frost giant enclave in the level above. It can also reveal the malevolence behind the *Seed of Winter*—the double-headed white dragon Chillreaver.

The beholder stays up on the ledge area, but floats over to the northern passage of the ledge as well as toward the center of the room to find a better vantage point with which to launch its attacks. If possible, it tries to stay close to the stalagmites to gain cover unless it cannot attack any targets from that position. It targets ranged strikers with its *central eye* attack, and uses its *eye rays* where it sees a tactical advantage. If it is badly injured (less than 20 hit points left), it attempts to hide up in the shaft and target enemies directly below.

Xurgelmek, Arctic Sahuagin Baron (X) **Level 15 Elite Brute (Leader)**
Large natural humanoid (cold, aquatic) XP 2,400

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
Blood Healing (**Healing**) aura 10; any ally within the aura that starts its turn adjacent to a bloodied enemy regains 5 hit points.
HP 360; **Bloodied** 180
AC 27; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27
Resist 10 cold
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5 (7 on a charge; ice walk), swim 7 (9 on a charge)
Action Points 1

Trident (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +18 (+20 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 (1d10 + 12 against a bloodied target) damage plus 1d10 cold damage; see also *blood hunger*.

Bloodchill Claw (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 2; +18 (+20 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 (1d6 + 12 against a bloodied target) damage, and ongoing 5 cold damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).

Javelin (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +18 (+20 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 (2d8 + 12 against a bloodied target) damage.

Baron's Fury (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
The arctic sahuagin baron makes a trident attack and two claw attacks.

Blood Hunger
The arctic sahuagin baron gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +5 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +15
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+10)
Equipment trident, 3 javelins, headdress

2 Arctic Sahuagin Raiders (R) **Level 11 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 600 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 112; **Bloodied** 56
AC 27; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22
Resist 10 cold
Speed 5 (7 on a charge, ice walk), swim 5 (7 on a charge)

Trident (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
+18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 (1d8 + 7 to a bloodied target) damage plus 1d8 cold damage, and the target is marked until the end of the arctic sahuagin raider's next turn.

Trident (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 (2d6 + 7 to a bloodied target) damage.

Opportunistic Strike (immediate reaction, when a flanked enemy shifts; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
The arctic sahuagin raider makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Sliding Strike (immediate interrupt, when a marked enemy makes an attack that doesn't include the arctic sahuagin raider; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
The arctic sahuagin raider shifts 7 squares adjacent to the triggering enemy, and makes a melee basic attack against that enemy.

Blood Frenzy
The arctic sahuagin raider gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Equipment 2 tridents

Beholder Eye of Frost (B) **Level 14 Elite Artillery**
Large aberrant magical beast XP 2,000

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16; all-around vision, darkvision
HP 222; **Bloodied** 111; see also *ice armor*
AC 28 (30 with *ice armor*); **Fortitude** 28 (30 with *ice armor*), **Reflex** 28, **Will** 29
Resist 15 cold
Saving Throws +2
Speed fly 4 (hover)
Action Points 1

Bite (standard; at-will)
+21 vs. AC; 2d6 damage.

Central Eye (minor 1/round; at-will)
Ranged 8; +20 vs. Reflex; the target is weakened (save ends). If the target takes cold damage while weakened by this power, it is immobilized until no longer weakened.

Eyes of the Beholder (free, when an enemy starts its turn within 5 squares of the beholder eye of frost; at-will)
The eye of frost uses *eye ray* against the triggering enemy.

Eye Rays (standard; at-will) ✦ see text
The beholder eye of frost uses one *eye ray* power chosen from the list below. Using *eye rays* does not provoke opportunity attacks.
1—Freeze Ray (Cold): Ranged 10; +19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 7 cold damage.
2—Telekinesis Ray: Ranged 10; +19 vs. Fortitude; the eye of frost slides the target 6 squares.
3—Ice Ray (Cold): Ranged 10; +19 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 cold damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 cold damage and is immobilized (save ends both).

Ice Armor (when first bloodied; encounter)
The beholder eye of frost's AC and Fortitude increase by 2 until the end of the encounter, and any creature within its *eyes of the beholder* aura gains vulnerable 5 cold.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Deep Speech
Str 13 (+8) **Dex** 21 (+12) **Wis** 18 (+11)
Con 21 (+12) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 23 (+13)

Features of the Area

Illumination: This area is brightly lit.

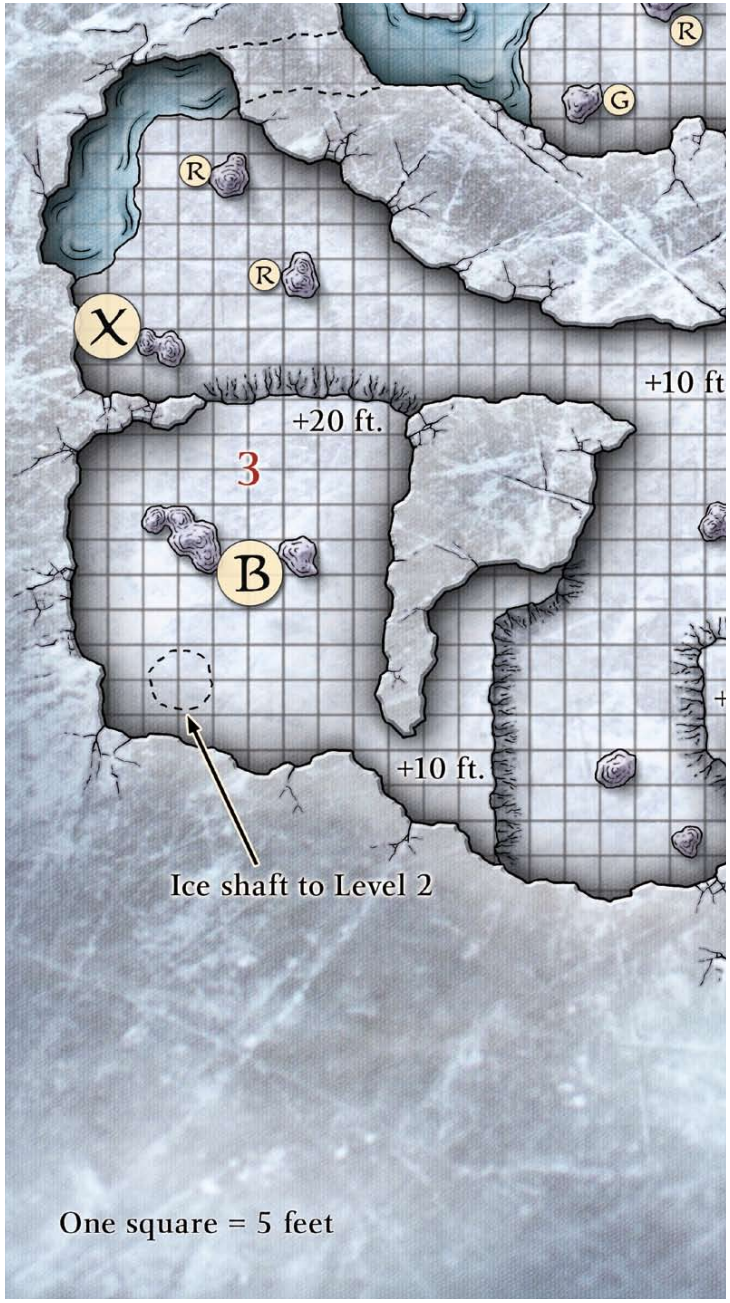
Ceiling: The ceiling is 40 feet from the lower elevation's floor.

Stalagmites: These are blocking terrain and provide cover. A creature can move around the corner of a stalagmite square normally.

Ledge: There is a 20-foot high ledge that effectively cuts this room in two. It requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb.

Water Tunnel: Canny PCs might think to take the *apparatuses of Kwalish* through the water tunnel into this area, or attempt to swim it. If they do so, they gain surprise on Xurgelmek and the others present here.

Ice Shaft: This smooth shaft is 10 feet in diameter and leads up 30 feet to the second level of Icehome. It requires a DC 30 Athletics check to climb.



14: Uarion's Fate

Encounter Level 14 (5,000 XP)

Setup

Uarion, icetouched githzerai mindmage (U)
2 chillfire destroyers (C)
5 windstrikers (W)

When the arctic sahuagin attacked the Nefelese ships bound for Icehome, one vessel limped its way to the shore of the iceberg. There, the crew met an unfortunate end at the hands of frost giants, but one escaped—a githzerai mentalist named Uarion, an agent of the Thraxinium.

Evading capture by the frost giants, Uarion scaled the iceberg and entered through the caldera at the top. He then encountered Chillreaver, who defeated him in combat and subjugated him to the power of the *Seed of Winter*, transforming him into an icetouched creature and shattering his formidable will. With such an unexpected resource, Chillreaver allowed the mentalist to participate in his next servitor experiment, given the githzerai's affinity for the elements.

Uarion was installed in the elemental farm that Chillreaver had set up on the second level near the frost giants. There Chillreaver's captured elementals have been placed in icy stasis in preparation for the dragon's attack on Nefelus. Uarion was provided with the means to awaken them from their slumber should Chillreaver's icy lair need them.

When the PCs ascend from the icy shaft on the lower level, read:

An eerie rippling glow bounces off the numerous stalagmites in this cavern, illuminating the area like light shining off the water. At the far end, a pair of ledges rises up close to the ceiling. There is a tunnel passageway to the north.

Perception Check
DC 18: *You think you detect movement in several of the stalagmites, like something is trapped inside.*
DC 23: *A humanoid form stands in the shadows on the far ledge.*

If the PCs attempt to call out or parley with Uarion, read:

The voice from the shadows calls out in a metered, cool tone. "You have come to threaten the will of my master. The Seed must be protected at all costs. Approach no farther and leave the way you arrived, and I shall spare you the agony of the change."

A DC 23 Insight check reveals that the githzerai's voice, though cool and calm, has conflicted underpinnings, and an external force is supplanting his will.

One the PCs approach, Uarion attacks the PCs.

Development

The elemental creatures are encased in the ice stalagmites at the start of the combat, and they can be freed only by Uarion. Each round on his turn, Uarion can use a minor action to shatter one of the stalagmites containing an elemental (destroying the cover and making the square difficult terrain), or use a move action to shatter two stalagmites. He cannot spend both a minor action and a move action on the same turn. Uarion frees the chillfire destroyers first, and then the windstrikers. He cannot shatter stalagmites that do not contain an elemental.

It should become apparent after the first round of combat that the PCs are fighting a frost-skinned version of Uarion, the missing githzerai from Nefelus.

Tactics

Uarion stays at range from the PCs, using his less accessible position to his advantage. He leads off with *mindstrike* and continues to use it until the PCs move to within range of his other powers. He saves his *elemental bolts* and *concussion orb* until he has multiple targets within range. His *accurate mind* allows him to fire on targets without concern for the cover granted by the stalagmites. He engages in melee only as a last resort, but he does not flee the area under any circumstances.

The chillfire destroyers use their *trample* to flatten defenders and other front-line targets and then attack lighter armored foes. If a PC proves resistant to its cold attacks, it switches to a new target.

The windstrikers use *searching wind* to designate targets as their quarry, and then each quickly moves up on its next turn to deliver a *lethal windstrike*. They use their flight to avoid getting stuck next to defenders.

All the elementals are completely subservient to Chillreaver's, and by extension, Uarion's will and fight until they are destroyed.

Uarion, Icetouched Githzerai Mindmage (U) **Level 14 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +16
HP 105; **Bloodied** 52
AC 28; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 26; see also *iron mind*
Resist 10 cold
Speed 7 (ice walk)

⊕ **Unarmed Strike** (standard; at-will)
+19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage.

Mindstrike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Psychic**
Ranged 20; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends); see also *accurate mind*.

Elemental Bolts (standard; daily) ✦ see text
Ranged 10; Uarion makes 3 attacks, each against a different target; +17 vs. Reflex; 4d8 acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage (Uarion chooses the damage type for each attack); see also *accurate mind*.

Concussion Orb (standard; encounter)
Area burst 2 within 10; +17 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Accurate Mind
The Uarion's ranged attacks ignore cover and concealment (but not superior cover or total concealment).

Iron Mind (immediate interrupt, when Uarion would be hit by an attack; encounter)
Uarion gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of its next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Deep Speech
Skills Acrobatics +18, Arcana +13, Athletics +10, Insight +16
Str 13 (+8) **Dex** 19 (+11) **Wis** 19 (+11)
Con 15 (+9) **Int** 13 (+8) **Cha** 10 (+7)

2 Chillfire Destroyers (C) **Level 14 Brute**
Large elemental magical beast (cold, fire) XP 1,000 each

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +12
Leaking Firecore (**Fire**) aura 2; while the chillfire destroyer is bloodied, each creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 10 fire damage.
HP 173; **Bloodied** 86; see also *firecore breach*
AC 26; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 25
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold, 10 fire
Speed 5

⊕ **Freezing Slam** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage plus 1d12 cold damage.

Trample (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
The chillfire destroyer moves its speed and can move through enemies' spaces. The destroyer makes an attack: +15 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 6 damage plus 1d10 cold damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Firecore Breach (when the chillfire destroyer drops to 0 hit points) ✦ **Fire**
The destroyer does not die until the start of its next turn. Until then, the destroyer can take no actions. At the start of the destroyer's next turn, it makes an attack: close burst 3; +15 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 6 fire damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 16 (+10) **Dex** 20 (+12) **Wis** 20 (+12)
Con 23 (+13) **Int** 5 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+8)

5 Windstrikers (W) **Level 9 Lurker**
Medium elemental magical beast (air) XP 400 each

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28
AC 21; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 20
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial
Speed 0, fly 8 (hover)

⊕ **Windstrike** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**, **Thunder**
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 cold and thunder damage.

Lethal Windstrike (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**, **Thunder**
Reach 2; targets the windstriker's quarry (see *searching wind*); +14 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 cold and thunder damage. *Effect:* The target is no longer designated as the windstriker's quarry.

Searching Wind (standard; recharges when the windstriker hits with *lethal windstrike*) ✦ **Cold**, **Thunder**
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Will; 2d6 + 5 cold and thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone. *Effect:* The target is designated as the windstriker's quarry.

Shifting Wind (immediate reaction, when the windstriker takes damage; at-will)
Until the end of its next turn, the windstriker does not provoke opportunity attacks and can move through enemies' spaces.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Primordial
Str 14 (+6) **Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 5 (+1) **Cha** 17 (+7)

Features of the Area

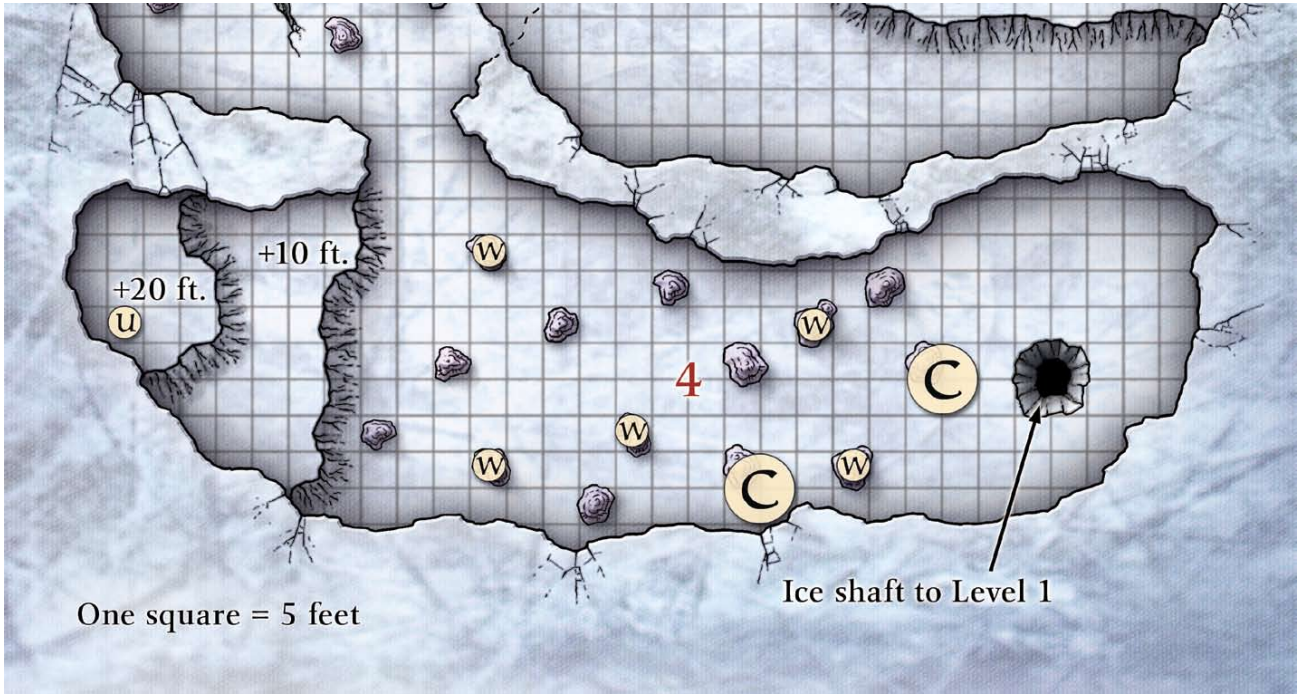
Illumination: The strange eerie glow in this room provides only dim light.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet from the lowest elevation's floor.

Stalagmites: These are blocking terrain and provide cover. A creature can move around the corner of a stalagmite square normally. When Uarion shatters a stalagmite, it is destroyed and replaced with difficult terrain in the square it occupied.

Ledge: There is a 10-foot and 20-foot ledge at the far western end of the room. Climbing either ledge requires a DC 20 Athletics check.

Ice Shaft: This smooth shaft is 10 feet in diameter and leads down 30 feet to the first level of Icehome. It requires a DC 30 Athletics check to climb.



Aftermath

Assuming the PCs render Uarion unconscious instead of killing him, they likely have questions for him. However, until the characters remove the *Seed of Winter* from Chillreaver's clutches, Uarion is intractable and can be viewed only as a threat. This might pose a problem for the PCs, since they have to decide what to do with the githzerai. They might decide to leave him here, take him to their submersibles (if they have space for him), or carry him along while they continue exploring.

15: Icy Sappers

Encounter Level 14 (5,600 XP)

Setup

4 icetouched umber hulks (U)

In this chamber, four icetouched umber hulks, retrieved by the frost giants some time ago, dwell here under the control of Chillreaver. Through the influence of the *Seed's* transformative power, their wills have become pliable to the dragon's commands, and they patiently await the opportunity to once again burrow through the earth. Chillreaver plans to use them as sappers against Nefelus if needed.

In their boredom, they have begun to tunnel around in their area. However, the dragon recently put a stop to this, worried that they might cause undue structural damage to Icehome.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

A rugged crevasse splits the ice in the middle of this cavern. A gently sloping tunnel, looking as though it was recently excavated, is present in the southeast end. To the north, another tunnel exit is visible, although it is partially blocked by a massive stalagmite.

Perception Check

DC 18: *You can hear something moving about inside the crevasse.*

Tactics

The icetouched umber hulks are down in the bottom of the crevasse, 20 feet from the cavern floor. Once a PC gets within 5 squares of their starting positions, they roll initiative and move up to investigate (and attack).

The umber hulks use their *confusing gaze* each round, attempting to slide targets into the crevasse. If they hit a target with their *grabbing double attack*, they try to pull the grabbed PC into the crevasse to be devoured. They leave the crevasse initially only to attack the PCs and then only if they have no PCs to attack in the crevasse.

4 Icetouched Umber Hulks (U)	**Level 12 Elite Soldier**
Large natural magical beast	XP 1,400 each
Initiative +11	**Senses** Perception +13; darkvision, tremorsense 5
HP 248; **Bloodied** 124	
AC 30; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27	
Resist 10 cold	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 5 (ice walk), burrow 2 (tunneling)	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 2d6 + 8 damage.	
⸸ **Grabbing Double Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The icetouched umber hulk makes two claw attacks. If both claw attacks hit the same target, the target is grabbed. A grabbed target takes ongoing 10 damage from the icetouched umber hulk's mandibles until it escapes. The icetouched umber hulk cannot make any other attacks while grabbing a creature.	
✧ **Confusing Gaze** (minor 1/round; at-will) ✦ **Gaze, Psychic**	
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +16 vs. Will; the target slides 5 squares and is dazed (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 26 (+14)	**Dex** 16 (+9)	**Wis** 14 (+8)
Con 20 (+11)	**Int** 5 (+3)	**Cha** 11 (+6)

Features of the Area

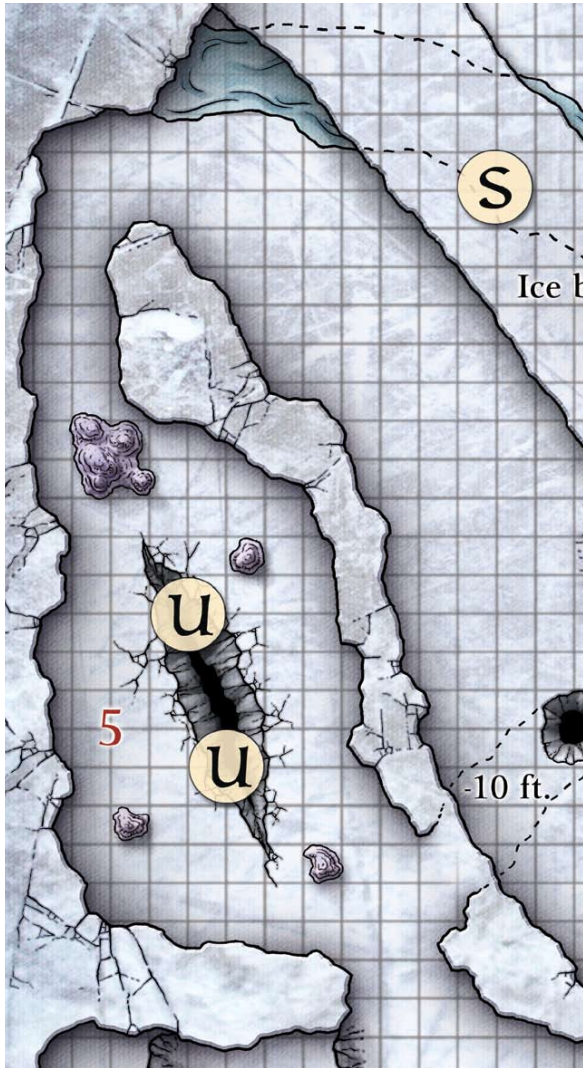
Illumination: This area is brightly lit, except inside the crevasse, where it is dimly lit.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet from the floor.

Stalagmites: These are blocking terrain and provide cover. A creature can move around the corner of a stalagmite square normally.

Crevasse: The crevasse is 20 feet deep and requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb.

Ice Tunnel: The tunnel to the southeast goes under and out into the frost giant enclave, severely sloping upward 10 feet. Exiting the tunnel on the frost giant enclave side requires ice walk, a burrow speed, or a DC 15 Athletics check.



16: Frost Giant Enclave

Encounter Level 17 (8,000 XP)

Setup

Nara of the Wastes, frost giant ice shaper (N)
3 frost giant scouts (S)
2 winter wolves (W)

The temporary home of the frost giant clan that has allied with Chillreaver, the frost giants here are led by Nara of the Wastes, a sacred ice shaper second in power only to the jarl of her tribe. Chillreaver has long been an ally of these frost giants when they both lived in the frozen lands north of the Winterbole Forest, beyond Nentir Vale.

Chillreaver initially came to the frost giant jarl after receiving the *Seed of Winter* and in the early stages of his plans to destroy Nefelus. After some negotiation over land rights once Nefelus's climate had been adjusted to the frost giants' liking, the jarl agreed to send a contingent with the dragon once Icehome was formed well enough to sustain occupants. Nara was chosen to lead the frost giants in Icehome, and she has created a portal back to their realm should they have need of supplies, servitors, or additional warriors. Indeed, Chillreaver has requested Nara send back hunters periodically to bring back creatures he thought important to subject to the influences of the *Seed of Winter* for use in the coming assault on Nefelus.

Now, Nara commands about fifteen frost giants in Icehome. Most are out on patrols around the recently created ice ring blockade, keeping the Nefelese from attempting any type of escape, but a few remain here as her personal retinue.

When the PCs enter this area, read:

This massive cavern is far larger than any you have yet seen in this iceberg complex. A slick, steep-sloping ice bridge hangs over a fast-moving stream; the stream's banks are thick with a white mist. To the west, a platform rises up 30 feet from the floor and is connected to the ice bridge. Unlike in the other caverns, no stalagmites are here. Furs, animal skins, tools, and large weapons are piled in various places near the walls.

The winter wolves begin lying down (prone), in the positions shown on the map. Unless the PCs enter from the umber hulk tunnel, they spot the PCs and engage in combat.

The scouts are on watch here, and at least one notices the PCs from any approach they use (unless they are attempting to sneak in). Nara is standing at the top of the stairs leading up to the ice bridge.

Tactics

The winter wolves wait to see if the PCs attempt to cross the water to meet them; otherwise, they use the natural staircase to access the platform and leap down in a *takedown* charge on any PCs close enough to it (or attack PCs already on the platform). They are Nara's personal companions, and they defend her if she looks like she's in trouble. If they knock a target prone on the platform, they drag it off the edge if possible.

The scouts start in their indicated positions, but quickly pull back to the ice bridge where they have the advantage of maneuverability. They target defenders and other melee characters with their *chillshards* to keep them from accessing the platform.

Nara uses her *wall of frost* to separate the PCs, allowing the scouts to concentrate fire on a smaller group of characters. She uses her *freezing bolt* to slow the advance of melee characters, and uses *ice slide* to move PCs off the platform if they access it. She grants *ice armor* to her winter wolves, if possible.

Nara orders the scouts to stand their ground no matter what the cost, but if she is at half of her bloodied total or lower, she attempts to flee up the ice bridge to make her last stand with the ice gargoyles in the hall above.

What Nara Knows

Nara of the Wastes is not above selling information for her life. If she is captured and coerced into talking in exchange for her freedom, she tells the PCs about Chillreaver, his relationship with the frost giants, and what she knows of his plans (see the Setup in this encounter). She also mentions that Chillreaver has greatly amplified the power of an artifact known as the *Seed of Winter*, which was given to him by a fomorian king from the Feywild named Cachlain.

Features of the Area

Illumination: This area is brightly lit.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 60 feet from the floor.

Crevasse: The crevasse is 20 feet deep and requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb.

Platform: A platform connects to an ice bridge and dominates the middle of the room, with a 30-foot ledge that requires a DC 20 Athletics check to climb. The platform is accessible by a natural ice stairway. Ascending these stairs counts as difficult terrain; descending them is treated as normal terrain.

Ice Bridge: The ice bridge slopes upward and is slick; it is treated as a slide by creatures without ice walk. The ice bridge is difficult terrain, and a creature that enters one of the ice bridge's squares must make a DC 20 Acrobatics check; failure indicates that the creature moves to the end of the bridge (on the platform side), falls prone, and ends its move.

Stream and Pool: The water here is 10 feet deep, and it can be crossed by swimming or jumping over it. However, choke frost rises up from the water, hindering the movement of any creature passing through it.

Choke Frost: The squares containing the stream and pool, as well as all squares adjacent to them, are filled with choke frost, which is a light, white mist that congeals into thick ice as creatures move through it. Creatures entering a square of choke frost take a –1 penalty to speed for each square of choke frost through which they move. As a move action, a creature can negate this penalty. The frost giants (and other creatures with the cold keyword) are immune to this effect. The winter wolves are not immune, and they stay on their side of the water unless they traverse up the platform.

Ice Tunnel: The tunnel to the southeast goes under and out into the frost giant enclave, then severely slopes upward 10 feet. Exiting the tunnel on the frost giant enclave side requires ice walk, a burrow speed, or a DC 15 Athletics check.

Nara of the Wastes, Frost Giant Ice Shaper (N) **Level 19 Controller (Leader)**
Large elemental humanoid (cold, giant) XP 2,400

Initiative +12 **Senses** Perception +16
HP 182; **Bloodied** 91
AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 33
Resist 15 cold
Speed 8 (ice walk)

⊕ **Freezing Flail** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +24 vs. AC; 2d12 + 4 cold damage.

➶ **Freezing Bolt** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 20; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 4 cold damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

➶ **Ice Slide** (minor 1/round; at-will)
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Fortitude; the frost giant ice shaper slides the target 3 squares.

✲ **Wall of Frost** (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Conjuration**
Area wall 12 within 10; the frost giant ice shaper conjures a wall of swirling snow that lasts until the end of the ice shaper's next turn. The wall is 6 squares high and blocks line of sight. The wall's space is lightly obscured and is difficult terrain. A creature that starts its turn adjacent to the wall takes 5 cold damage, and a creature that enters a square of the wall or starts its turn there takes 15 cold damage. *Sustain Minor:* The wall persists.

Ice Armor (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅)
One ally within 10 squares of the frost giant ice shaper gains resist 10 to all damage until the end of the ice shaper's next turn.

Icebound Footing
When an effect pulls, pushes, or slides a frost giant ice shaper, the ice shaper moves 2 squares less than the effect specifies. Also, an ice shaper can make a saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant, Primordial
Skills Arcana +14, Heal +21, Intimidate +20
Str 21 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+12) **Wis** 25 (+16)
Con 22 (+15) **Int** 10 (+9) **Cha** 22 (+15)
Equipment chainmail, flail

3 Frost Giant Scouts (S) **Level 15 Artillery**
Large elemental humanoid (cold, giant) XP 1,200 each

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +17
HP 115; **Bloodied** 57
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27
Resist 15 cold
Speed 9 (ice walk)

⊕ **Icy Spear** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 cold damage.

➶ **Icy Arrow** (standard; requires longbow; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Ranged 20/40; +22 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn.

✲ **Chillshards** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Area burst 1 within 20; +20 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 8 cold damage, and the target is slowed and cannot take immediate or opportunity actions until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn.

Tundra Hunter (standard; recharges when first bloodied)
The frost giant makes a melee or ranged attack. If the attack hits, the target gains vulnerable 10 cold (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target gains vulnerable 5 cold (save ends).

Quick Release
The frost giant scout does not provoke opportunity attacks when it makes ranged or area attacks.

Icebound Footing
When an effect pulls, pushes, or slides a frost giant, the giant moves 2 squares less than the effect specifies. Also, a frost giant can make a saving throw to avoid being knocked prone.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +16, Stealth +18
Str 19 (+11) **Dex** 23 (+13) **Wis** 20 (+12)
Con 19 (+11) **Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+7)
Equipment hide armor, spear, longbow, 40 arrows

2 Winter Wolves (W) **Level 14 Skirmisher**
Large natural magical beast XP 1,000 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +10; low-light vision
HP 141; **Bloodied** 70
AC 28; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 24
Resist 20 cold
Speed 8 (ice walk)

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
+19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage plus 1d6 cold damage, or 2d10 + 6 damage plus 1d6 cold damage against a prone target.

Takedown (standard; usable only when charging; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
+19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage plus 1d6 cold damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Freezing Breath (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold**
Close blast 5; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 6 cold damage. *Miss:* Half damage.

Drag (minor; usable only while adjacent to a prone enemy; at-will)
The winter wolf shifts 1 square, and pulls a prone target that is adjacent to it 1 square.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Str 23 (+13) **Dex** 21 (+12) **Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 21 (+12) **Int** 9 (+6) **Cha** 10 (+7)

17: Gargoyles in the Hall

Encounter Level 16 (6,800 XP)

Setup

4 ice gargoyles (G)
2 ice gargoyle reavers (R)

This hall was fashioned by Chillreaver as his grand receiving chamber, and he one day hopes to take his conquered foes here for the purpose of subjugating them. For now, it serves as the home for the first of his creations born from the bosom of Icehome—his ice gargoyles.

The ice gargoyles serve Chillreaver as messengers, scouts, and guards for the nearly completed upper level of his palace. Even more so than the other creatures of Icehome, they are completely subservient to his whims—effectively an extension of his will—and Chillreaver views them as his children.

When the PCs arrive here from the ice bridge, read:

This room sits in stark contrast to everything you've seen before in the iceberg complex. Here, it appears that the room has been intricately carved from the ice; no snow, rough patches, or uneven grades mar the smooth walls, floors, and ceiling of this chamber.

Perfectly round ice columns frame a large-based platform at the far end. On top of the platform are two massive ice gargoyle statues. To either side of this platform sit smaller ones with smaller ice gargoyles. There is no visible exit from this room except where you entered.

The ice gargoyles begin in their ice form. If a PC moves past the last set of pillars leading into the center of the room, the ice gargoyles revert to their normal forms and attack. They also do the same if a PC moves adjacent to the illusory sliding wall to the east.

Tactics

When the ice gargoyles revert to their normal forms, they use *flying grab* to harry their foes, using the ample ceiling to maneuver out of range of melee and short ranged attacks.

The ice gargoyle reavers stay close to their enemies, keeping as many PCs as possible within their *freezing gaze*. Targets that are weakened by the gaze are then subjected to their *bloodchill bite*.

The gargoyles fight until they are destroyed.

2 Ice Gargoyle Reavers (R) **Level 15 Lurker**
Large elemental humanoid (cold) XP 1,200 each

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
Freezing Gaze (**Cold**) aura 2; requires the ice gargoyle reaver to be in its *ice prison*; an enemy that enters or starts its turn within the aura is weakened until the start of its next turn and takes 5 cold damage.
HP 116; **Bloodied** 58
AC 29; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 26
Immune slow; **Resist** 15 cold
Vulnerable fire (the ice gargoyle reaver grants combat advantage until the end of the attacker's next turn)
Speed 6, fly 8; see also *flying grab*

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends).

⸸ **Bloodchill Bite** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Healing**
+20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 cold damage (3d6 + 5 cold damage against a weakened target), the target gains vulnerable 5 cold (save ends), and the ice gargoyle reaver regains 5 hit points.

⸸ **Flying Grab** (standard; recharges after using *ice prison*)
The ice gargoyle reaver flies 8 squares and makes a melee basic attack at the end of that movement. If the attack hits, the target is grabbed. The ice gargoyle reaver can try to move the grabbed target as part of its next move action. If it succeeds, it can move or fly at full speed, pulling the target with it.

Ice Prison (standard; at-will)
The ice gargoyle reaver encases itself and anyone it is grabbing in ice. In this form, the ice gargoyle reaver and any target it is grabbing gain resist 20 all, except against the cold damage dealt by this power. Both can still see their surroundings, but they cannot use other normal senses.
A target the ice gargoyle reaver is grabbing is stunned, restrained, and takes ongoing 20 cold damage (save ends all, ending the grab and *ice prison*). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed and weakened until the end of the ice gargoyle reaver's next turn.
Each time a target the ice gargoyle reaver is grabbing takes the ongoing cold damage, the ice gargoyle reaver regains 5 hit points. The ice gargoyle reaver can take no actions in the *ice prison*, other than to end the effect (a minor action). If the gargoyle takes damage in this form, the *ice prison* is broken, freeing the grabbed target as if it saved and ending the grab.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial
Skills Stealth +19

Str 25 (+14)	**Dex** 24 (+14)	**Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 22 (+13)	**Int** 5 (+4)	**Cha** 20 (+12)

4 Ice Gargoyles (G)	Level 12 Lurker
Medium elemental humanoid (cold)	XP 700 each

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48
AC 26; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23
Immune slow; **Resist** 15 cold
Vulnerable fire (the ice gargoyle is dazed until the end of the attacker's next turn)
Speed 6, fly 8; see also *flyby grab*

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
+17 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage plus 1d6 + 4 cold damage.

⸸ **Flyby Grab** (standard; recharges after using *ice prison*)
The ice gargoyle flies 8 squares and makes a melee basic attack at the end of that movement. If the attack hits, the target is grabbed. The ice gargoyle can try to move the grabbed target as part of its next move action. If it succeeds, it can move or fly at full speed, pulling the target with it.

Ice Prison (standard; at-will)
The ice gargoyle encases itself and anyone it is grabbing in ice. In this form, the ice gargoyle and any target it is grabbing gain resist 15 all, except against the cold damage dealt by this power. Both can still see their surroundings, but they cannot use other normal senses. A target the ice gargoyle is grabbing is stunned, restrained, and takes ongoing 20 cold damage (save ends all, ending the grab and the ice prison). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of the ice gargoyle's next turn.
Each time a target the ice gargoyle is grabbing takes the ongoing cold damage, the ice gargoyle regains 5 hit points. The ice gargoyle can take no actions in the *ice prison*, other than to end the effect (a minor action). If the gargoyle takes damage in this form, the *ice prison* is broken, freeing the grabbed target and ending the grab.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial
Skills Stealth +18

Str 24 (+14)	**Dex** 23 (+13)	**Wis** 10 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	**Int** 5 (+4)	**Cha** 17 (+10)

Features of the Area

Illumination: This area is brightly lit.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 60 feet from the floor.

Floor: The floor here is treated as difficult terrain for anyone moving on it without ice walk. In addition, creatures without ice walk standing on the floor are moved one additional square when subjected to forced movement.

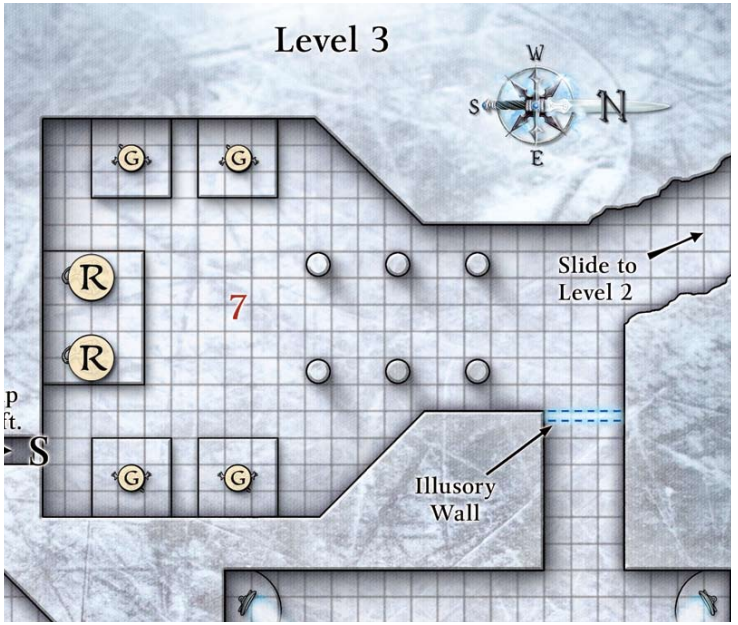
Secret Door: There is a secret door to the south that leads into Chillreaver's treasure chamber. It can be discovered with a DC 25 Perception check, and a DC 20 Arcana check or DC 25 Thievery check opens it.

Illusory Sliding Wall: To the east, a wall has been masked by an illusion. A character adjacent to the wall who succeeds on a DC 15 passive Perception check notices that something is unusual about the wall. Another DC 25 Perception check or DC 25 Arcana check pierces the illusion and reveals an intricate inscription in Draconic upon the wall.

The inscription reads,

"Pass through this portal and enter the presence of Chillreaver, master of Icehome, greatest among the Dark Queen's frozen children. Prepare for supplication in the proper manner, and you can enter his fearsome domain and receive his cold gift."

A character who kneels in a square adjacent to the wall causes the wall to slide away into the Chillreaver's chamber. This can also be accomplished with a DC 20 Thievery check in one of the adjacent squares.



A DC 13 Perception check reveals a torn scrap of a note stuck between the talons of one of the defeated gargoyles.

The note reads:
"...new dwarf emissary has arrived at the court. He seems shrewd and capable, and his family connections will help us at the stone king's court in light of the events in Sayre. I have faith that Her Majesty's will should prevail, but Ironfell's presence will only help..."

The rest is blurred or torn, except for a fragment of a signature, which reads "Zetc..."

18: Chillreaver's Seed

Encounter Level 18 (10,000 XP)

Setup

Chillreaver (C)
Seed of Winter (S)

Of late, Chillreaver has spent almost all his time here, coaxing every possible thread of power from the *Seed of Winter*. As he gets closer and closer to finishing off the island nation of Nefelus, his abilities with the artifact have gone far beyond the reach of mortal users.

He has constructed this chamber to house the artifact, channel its power, and provide a sanctum sanctorum for himself to draw even more secrets from the *Seed*. More information on Chillreaver's plans and his motives can be found in Appendix 2 (page 49).

When the PCs enter the chamber, read:

Inside is an impressive and terrifying sight. The room is bathed in blue-white light, with beams focused on a small white object floating atop a pedestal high above your heads. The beams originate from ten silvery mirrors positioned along the east and west sides of the walkway you stand upon. Down below, you can see the base of the pedestal where the beams are focused; the pedestal's length make it appear almost like an ice obelisk. An energy hangs about the room, and the air is colder than you've felt anywhere else in the complex. Briefly, you feel an invasive presence in your mind, as if it is searching for something . . . and then it is gone.

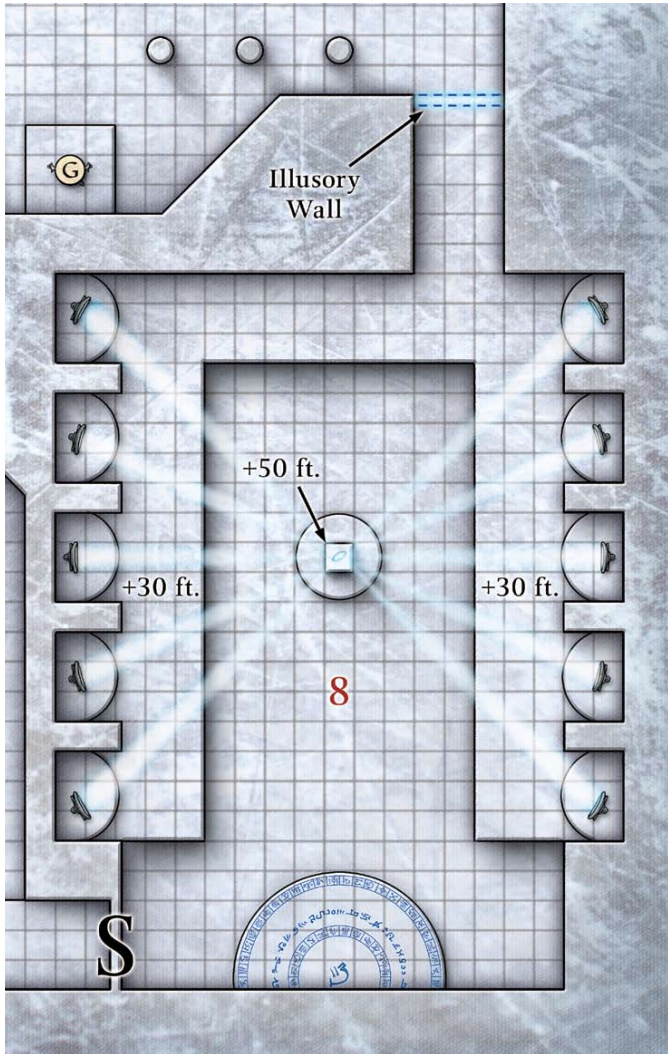
You then fix your eyes upon the terrible form that sits upon a rune-inscribed icy dais at the far end of the room. A gigantic, two-headed white dragon meets your gaze, its eyes black as the soulless depths and its mouths smoking with its icy breath. It speaks, both voices echoing off the icy walls in unison, "The mages must be desperate to save their people. They send outsiders here to do their work. How weak! How pathetic! Soon the storm comes to them, and nothing will escape my wrath!"

Tactics

Chillreaver is not at all pleased that the PCs have arrived at this late hour. Furious, he launches his assault on the characters by flying across the room and using his *breath weapon* against the largest PC concentration possible. He stays up in the air, hovering near the *Seed* to protect it from the characters' meddling.

In subsequent rounds, Chillreaver keeps out of melee range as long as possible, attacking with *icy tomb* against targets that are effective at range, and using his *frightful presence* when all (or almost all) the PCs can be affected. He uses his action points as soon as he can (provided he can take two attack actions in a round in which he spends an action point).

Chillreaver is no coward, and he does not abandon the *Seed of Winter* under any circumstances. If one or more characters start shattering the *silver mirrors* or attempt to wrest the *Seed* from its pedestal, Chillreaver assaults them with great fury, choosing his most damaging attacks. If it looks likely that the PCs will destroy all the *silver mirrors*, Chillreaver attempts to snatch up the *Seed of Winter* and exit Icehome through the treasure room and out the top of the iceberg. There, he can mount a final stand against the PCs.



Features of the Area

Illumination: This area is brightly lit.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 60 feet from the floor.

Floor: The floor here is treated as difficult terrain for anyone moving on it without ice walk. In addition, creatures without ice walk standing on the floor are moved 1 additional square when subjected to forced movement.

Walkway: A walkway frames the room in a "U"-shape. The walkway is 30 feet up from the floor where the dais and pedestal base are found, and it's another 20 feet up in the room's center to the *Seed of Winter*. The *silver mirrors* are at the walkway level, pointed up at the *Seed*.

Secret Door: A secret door to the south leads into Chillreaver's treasure chamber. PCs discover it with a DC 20 Perception check, and it can be opened with a DC 20 Arcana check or DC 25 Thievery check. Chillreaver might use this way out to flee with the *Seed of Winter* if he's able.

Runed Dais: The semicircular dais on the eastern side of the room bears a number of deep blue or purple rejuvenation runes carved into the ice. Any creature on or adjacent to the dais who makes a DC 20 Arcana check can spend a healing surge as a minor action. Chillreaver can also take advantage of this twice during the combat.

Silver Mirrors: Ten *silver mirrors* focus the energy of the *Seed of Winter*, allowing Chillreaver to tap into an incredible amount of ancient power. These *silver mirrors* are big—about 6 feet tall by 4 feet wide—and were stolen from various places in the world by Chillreaver's agents. A DC 23 Arcana check reveals these are some of the *silver mirrors* that the Nefelese once used as communication devices, and their magic has now been appropriated to power and focus the artifact. Although they are extremely bulky and heavy to carry out (they each weigh about 60 pounds), they are easy enough to shatter and render completely useless for good or ill. They have AC 29, other defenses 26; hp 1. A DC 21 Dungeoneering check reveals that shattering all the *silver mirrors* will cause the *Seed of Winter* to fall to the floor.

Seed of Winter: While placed on the pedestal and acting as the focus for Chillreaver's weather manipulation, the *Seed* actively attempts to defend itself from the interloping PCs. It is treated like a trap (see the entry below), and works in conjunction with Chillreaver when possible. The *Seed* cannot be destroyed, but it can be handled without harm. Once the *Seed* is removed from the pedestal, it can no longer sustain its current magic while in an unfocused state. The entirety of Icehome begins to crumble away.

Chillreaver, Exarch of Tiamat (C) Level 17 Solo Soldier
Huge natural magical beast (dragon) XP 8,000

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
Chillwrath Aura (Cold) aura 2; each square within the aura costs enemies 1 extra square of movement to enter.
HP 845; **Bloodied** 422; see also *bloodied breath*
AC 33; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29
Resist 25 cold, 10 poison
Saving Throws +5; see *two-headed*
Speed 8 (ice walk), fly 8 (hover), overland flight 12
Action Points 2

Bite (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 plus 2d6 cold damage, plus 2d6 cold damage on an opportunity attack or against an immobilized target.

Claw (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage, and the target is pulled 2 squares.

Chillreaver's Fury (standard; at-will)
Chillreaver makes a bite attack and a claw attack.

Deep Freeze (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 cold damage, ongoing 10 cold damage, and the target is immobilized and dazed (save ends all). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of Chillreaver's next turn.

Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Cold**
Close blast 5; +21 vs. Reflex; 6d6 + 7 cold damage, and the target is immobilized and dazed (save ends both). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of Chillreaver's next turn.

Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Cold**
Chillreaver's breath weapon recharges, and he uses it immediately.

Frightful Presence (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +21 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of Chillreaver's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Threatening Reach
Chillreaver can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within his reach (3 squares).

Two-Headed
Chillreaver rolls initiative twice, and receives two full turns during a round. He rolls for recharge on each of his turns. Each time Chillreaver becomes dazed or stunned, or suffers from an effect that has the charm keyword, that effect ends at the end of his next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Arcana +15, Athletics +24

Str 22 (+14)	**Dex** 16 (+11)	**Wis** 17 (+11)
Con 26 (+16)	**Int** 14 (+10)	**Cha** 14 (+10)

Aftermath

Once the *Seed of Winter* is unseated from its position on the pedestal, a blast of energy crackles through the room. Five rounds later, a great rumbling sound is followed by deafening cracks. The magic which sustained Icehome is becoming undone, and the whole structure will soon crumble into the sea. The characters need to escape. Go to "Escape from Icehome" on page 16.

Seed of Winter (S) **Level 18 Blaster**
Trap XP 2,000

A large shimmering white acorn floats on a pedestal high above. Cold blue-white beams travel from 10 silver mirrors positioned throughout the chamber to converge on the seed.

Trap: The *Seed of Winter* attacks the nearest creature without the cold keyword within range on its turn.

Perception

Characters can't use Perception to detect this trap.

Additional Skill: Arcana

- ✦ DC 25: The character recognizes that the *silver mirrors* are focusing the *Seed of Winter's* power.
- ✦ DC 30: The *Seed of Winter* is an artifact and is indestructible by any conventional means.

Initiative +8

Trigger

Once on its turn, the trap attacks the nearest creature to it within range without the cold keyword.

Attack

Standard Action **Ranged** 10

Target: One creature

Attack: +24 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dominated (save ends) and is under the control of Chillreaver. *Aftereffect:* The target takes 2d10 + 5 cold damage and is immobilized (save ends).

Countermeasures

- ✦ An adjacent character can remove the *Seed of Winter* from its pedestal with a DC 35 Thievery or Strength check. This disables the trap. The character gains a +2 bonus to this check for each *silver mirror* that has been destroyed. The *Seed of Winter* falls to the floor if all the *silver mirrors* have been destroyed.
- ✦ A character can attack any of the 10 *silver mirrors* (AC 29, other defenses 26; hp 1 each). Destroying all the *silver mirrors* disables the trap and the *Seed of Winter* falls to the floor.

SC2: Escape from Icehome

Encounter Level 16 (7,000 XP)

Setup

Start running the skill challenge, and have the action move from one scene to another with the dragon fighting all along the way. Run a few rounds of combat, have the PCs make a round of skill checks, move the scene, and start over again until you reach a climactic conclusion!

If the fight against Chillreaver (see the encounter beginning on page 40) spills outside through the hole in the roof, the PCs find themselves atop the steep, treacherous summit of Icehome. Away from the 15-foot wide pit that leads back down to area 9, the ground slopes steeply away. The summit is covered with difficult terrain, and the steep slope means that any round a character makes an attack, he or she must also succeed on a DC 20 Acrobatics check or fall prone after making the attack. A character wearing spiked ice shoes receives a +5 bonus on this check. Chillreavers size and weight mean that the dragon does not need to make Acrobatics checks if he lands to face the characters.

Escape from Icehome **Level 16**
Skill Challenge XP 7,000

The iceberg is beginning to break up and crumble into the sea, and you have to escape before you're taken down with it!

The PCs must find a way to escape from Icehome before the whole iceberg completely collapses.

Complexity
5 (requires 12 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Acrobatics, Athletics, Dungeoneering, Endurance, Perception

Other Skills
Arcana, Thievery

Victory
The PCs escape crumbling Icehome just before it falls into the sea, and they arrive back in Nefelus safely.

Defeat
The PCs are crushed in the collapse of the iceberg. Each PC loses all remaining healing surges and must make three DC 20 Endurance checks to attempt to swim to shore wounded in frigid cold water. If all three checks fail, the PC is dead and the body is later recovered by the surviving PCs.

Special: Grabbing Treasure
A PC can attempt to grab an as-yet unclaimed treasure parcel on the way out. This is declared when a primary skill check for the skill challenge is made; the check has a -5 penalty applied. (Also see Thievery, below.)

Special: Ice Walk
PCs with ice walk receive a +2 bonus to Acrobatics and Athletics checks for the duration of the skill challenge.

Special: Overland Flight
PCs with overland flight earn one automatic success for the group.

Special: Recovering Bodies
A PC can attempt to recover a body left elsewhere in the cavern on the way out, provided that the PC is heading in the general direction of the location of the body. This is declared when a primary skill check for the skill challenge is made; the check has a -5 penalty applied.

Acrobatics
DC 13 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC dodges out of the way of incoming ice boulders, falling debris, and floor hazards. Alternatively, the PC can wriggle through spaces that got a little too tight when the collapse began.

Arcana
DC 20 A success or failure on this check does not count as a success or failure on the skill challenge.
The PC has heard of similar magical energy imploding when the power source was drastically diminished. They also learn that the creatures affected by the Seed of Winter have begun to revert back to their normal form. The PC receives a +2 bonus to the next check in the skill challenge.

Athletics
DC 13 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC jumps, climbs, and runs to safety, using raw physical power to negotiate the hazards.

Dungeoneering
DC 13 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC knows the ins and outs of ice caves, and how to successfully avoid hazards while negotiating a collapsing structure.

Endurance
DC 13 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
Slow and steady wins the race, and the PC endures the cold water, icy tunnels, and windy slopes to find escape.

Perception
DC 13 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC looks for cracks and splits in the ice, falling debris, and shortcuts on the way out.

Thievery
DC 20 A success or failure on this check does not count as a success or failure on the skill challenge.
The PC can make a Thievery check to grab an as-yet unclaimed treasure parcel. If the check is successful, the PC does not take a penalty to the primary skill check.

SC3: Convincing Bejam

Encounter Level 15 (1,200 XP)

Setup

Bejam is willing to entertain the notion, but he is not convinced that he can do the most good away from his people and the Thraxinium. The PCs need to convince him to leave his ancestral home to represent the island nation in the Coalition.

Convincing Bejam **Level 15**
Skill Challenge XP 1,200

You have made a proposal to Bejam to have him represent the Nefelese among the Coalition against the githyanki threat. Although he seems reasonably receptive to the idea, he still has doubts that he can do his people the greatest good by leaving his official duties in Nefelus.

The PCs attempt to convince Bejam that he should join the Coalition, so that Nefelus has a voice among the group.

Complexity
1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
Arcana, Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight

Victory
The PCs convince Bejam to join the Coalition. He agrees to leave with Amyria once he has informed the Thraxinium of his decision.

Defeat
Bejam is unsure that leaving his people is the right thing to do in these dangerous times. He promises Nefelese assistance to the Coalition, but does not seek a seat among the group.

Special
All PCs receive a +1 bonus to checks in the skill challenge if they returned Uarion or brought back the *apparatuses of Kwalish*. If they did both, all PCs receive a +2 bonus instead.

Arcana
DC 18 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC explains that Nefelus's magical strengths might be exploited without proper representation on the Coalition.

Bluff
DC 18 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC flatters Bejam with talk of his accepting nature and the ability to have an open discourse, even with strangers from the mainland.

Diplomacy
DC 11 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC explains the merits of having a voice on the Coalition, allowing Nefelese interests to be fully articulated to the other members.

Insight
DC 11 A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
The PC senses that Bejam is struggling with this decision and wants to do what's best for his people, but sees the greater good in personally representing Nefelus.

Appendix 1: New Monsters

Several new monsters are introduced in the adventure and are also described below.

Frost Giant Scout

Frost giant scouts provide long-range support for their fellow frost giants with their cold-based attacks.

Frost Giant Scout	**Level 15 Artillery**
Large elemental humanoid (cold, giant)	XP 1,200
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +17
HP 115; **Bloodied** 57	
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 27	
Resist 15 cold	
Speed 9 (ice walk)	
Icy Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 cold damage.	
Icy Arrow (standard; requires longbow; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
Ranged 20/40; +22 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn.	
Chillshards (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**	
Area burst 1 within 20; +20 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 8 cold damage, and the target is slowed and cannot take immediate or opportunity actions until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of the frost giant scout's next turn.	
Tundra Hunter (standard; recharges when first bloodied)	
The frost giant makes a melee or ranged attack. If the attack hits, the target gains vulnerable 10 cold (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target gains vulnerable 5 cold (save ends).	
Quick Release	
The frost giant scout does not provoke opportunity attacks when it makes ranged or area attacks.	
Icebound Footing	
When an effect pulls, pushes, or slides a frost giant scout, the giant moves 2 squares fewer than the effect specifies.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Giant
Skills Athletics +16, Stealth +18	
Str 19 (+11)	**Dex** 23 (+13) **Wis** 20 (+12)
Con 19 (+11)	**Int** 10 (+7) **Cha** 10 (+7)
Equipment hide armor, spear, longbow, 40 arrows	

Frost Giant Scout Tactics

A frost giant scout stays at the longest distance away from its targets as possible while maintaining effective use of its *icy arrow* and *chillshards*.

Icetouched Creature

The influences of Chillreaver's manipulation of the *Seed of Winter* have resulted in several creatures becoming partially transformed both in body and mind. Physically, these creatures appear as normal, except that they have a blue-white frostlike tinge to their skin or hide, and they have deep blue eyes. Mentally, their wills have become more pliable, and they are completely subservient to Chillreaver.

An icetouched creature is treated just like a normal version of the base creature, except for the following changes.

Icetouched Creature
Resist 10 cold
Speed Gains ice walk

Ice Gargoyle

Chillreaver called these creatures from the Elemental Chaos, using the power of the *Seed of Winter*. He uses the ice gargoyles to guard the upper reaches of Icehome. Occasionally, they fly around the area near the ice floe and act as Chillreaver's eyes when the dragon is busy directing the power of the *Seed of Winter*.

Ice gargoyles are native to the Elemental Chaos, and they inhabit the bitterly cold places of the world and other planes. When encountered, they most commonly appear to be vague forms encased in steaming ice. Telltale signs of an ice gargoyle lair are various creatures trapped in ice with shocked looks of horror on their faces.

Ice Gargoyle Tactics

An ice gargoyle begins combat within its *ice prison*. When prey comes near, it reverts to its normal form and makes a flying grab. It then returns to its *ice prison* to feed on the creature it grabbed. If it is damaged by fire, it concentrates its attacks on the enemy that dealt it fire damage.

Ice Gargoyle Reaver Tactics

The ice gargoyle reaver fights like its smaller kin, but it has the added tactic of entering its *ice prison* and then using *bloodchill bite* on a foe its aura has weakened.

Ice Gargoyle		**Level 12 Lurker**
Medium elemental humanoid (cold)		XP 700
Initiative +14	**Senses** Perception +15; darkvision	
HP 96; **Bloodied** 48		
AC 26; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 23		
Immune slow; **Resist** 15 cold		
Vulnerable fire (the ice gargoyle is dazed until the end of the attacker's next turn)		
Speed 6, fly 8; see also *flyby grab*		
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**		
+17 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage plus 1d6 + 4 cold damage.		
⸸ **Flyby Grab** (standard; recharges after using *ice prison*)		
The ice gargoyle flies 8 squares and makes a melee basic attack at the end of that movement. If the attack hits, the target is grabbed. The ice gargoyle can try to move the grabbed target as part of its next move action. If it succeeds, it can move or fly at full speed, pulling the target with it.		
Ice Prison (standard; at-will)		
The ice gargoyle encases itself and anyone it is grabbing in ice. In this form, the ice gargoyle and any target it is grabbing gain resist 15 all, except against the cold damage dealt by this power. Both can still see their surroundings, but they cannot use other normal senses. A target the ice gargoyle is grabbing is stunned, restrained, and takes ongoing 20 cold damage (save ends all, ending the grab and the ice prison). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of the ice gargoyle's next turn.		
Each time a target the ice gargoyle is grabbing takes the ongoing cold damage, the ice gargoyle regains 5 hit points. The ice gargoyle can take no actions in the *ice prison*, other than to end the effect (a minor action). If the gargoyle takes damage in this form, the *ice prison* is broken, freeing the grabbed target and ending the grab.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Primordial	
Skills Stealth +18		
Str 24 (+14)	**Dex** 23 (+13)	**Wis** 10 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	**Int** 5 (+4)	**Cha** 17 (+10)

Ice Gargoyle Reaver	Level 15 Lurker
Large elemental humanoid (cold)	XP 1,200

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
Freezing Gaze (Cold) aura 2; requires the ice gargoyle reaver to be in its *ice prison*; an enemy that enters or starts its turn within the aura is weakened until the start of its next turn and takes 5 cold damage.
HP 116; **Bloodied** 58
AC 29; **Fortitude** 28, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 26
Immune slow; **Resist** 15 cold
Vulnerable fire (the ice gargoyle reaver grants combat advantage until the end of the attacker's next turn)
Speed 6, fly 8; see also *flying grab*

⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 cold damage (save ends).

Bloodchill Bite (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Healing**
+20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 cold damage (3d6 + 5 cold damage against a weakened target), and the target gains vulnerable 5 cold (save ends).

Flying Grab (standard; recharges after using *ice prison*)
The ice gargoyle reaver flies 8 squares and makes a melee basic attack at the end of that movement. If the attack hits, the target is grabbed. The ice gargoyle reaver can try to move the grabbed target as part of its next move action. If it succeeds, it can move or fly at full speed, pulling the target with it.

Ice Prison (standard; at-will)
The ice gargoyle reaver encases itself and anyone it is grabbing in ice. In this form, the ice gargoyle reaver and any target it is grabbing gain resist 20 all, except against the cold damage dealt by this power. Both can still see their surroundings, but they cannot use other normal senses. A target the ice gargoyle reaver is grabbing is stunned, restrained, and takes ongoing 20 cold damage (save ends all, ending the grab and *ice prison*). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed and weakened until the end of the ice gargoyle reaver's next turn.
Each time a target the ice gargoyle reaver is grabbing takes the ongoing cold damage, the ice gargoyle reaver regains 5 hit points. The ice gargoyle reaver can take no actions in the *ice prison*, other than to end the effect (a minor action). If the gargoyle takes damage in this form, the *ice prison* is broken, freeing the grabbed target as if it saved and ending the grab.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Primordial
Skills Stealth +19

Str 25 (+14)	**Dex** 24 (+14)	**Wis** 17 (+10)
Con 22 (+13)	**Int** 5 (+4)	**Cha** 20 (+12)

Arctic Sahuagin

The sahuagin were the first to be affected by the *Seed of Winter's* transformative influence. In the past, they harried the island of Nefelus, but now they pose an even greater threat. Contact with the *Seed's* emanations has quickly turned these creatures into tougher versions of their more mundane counterparts. In addition, some of the sahuagin are starting to find ways to alter their powers in their new forms, evolving beyond what they once were.

Reveling in their newfound power, these arctic sahuagin were the first of Chillreaver's allies, attempting to maintain his favor in exchange for more power. One day soon, they hope to wreak havoc on the Nefalese in revenge for years of frustration at the magocracy's hands.

Some arctic sahuagin ride dire sharks that have also been changed by the *Seed of Winter.*

Arctic Sahuagin Guard	Level 11 Minions
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)	XP 150

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 27; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22
Immune cold
Speed 5 (7 on a charge, ice walk), swim 5 (7 on a charge)

⊕ **Trident** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 7 damage (9 damage to a bloodied target), and the target is marked until the end of the arctic sahuagin guard's next turn.

Javelin (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 7 damage (9 damage to a bloodied target).

Blood Frenzy
The arctic sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal

Str 16 (+8)	**Dex** 14 (+7)	**Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 14 (+7)	**Int** 10 (+5)	**Cha** 10 (+5)

Equipment trident, 3 javelins

Arctic Sahuagin Raider **Level 11 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 600

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 112; **Bloodied** 56
AC 27; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 22
Resist 10 cold
Speed 5 (7 on a charge, ice walk), swim 5 (7 on a charge)

Trident (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
+18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 (1d8 + 7 to a bloodied target) damage plus 1d8 cold damage, and the target is marked until the end of the arctic sahuagin raider's next turn.

Trident (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 (2d6 + 7 to a bloodied target) damage.

Opportunistic Strike (immediate reaction, when a flanked enemy shifts; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
The arctic sahuagin raider makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.

Sliding Strike (immediate interrupt, when a marked enemy makes an attack that doesn't include the arctic sahuagin raider; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
The arctic sahuagin raider shifts 7 squares adjacent to the triggering enemy, and makes a melee basic attack against that enemy.

Blood Frenzy
The arctic sahuagin raider gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 14 (+7) **Wis** 12 (+6)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 10 (+5) **Cha** 10 (+5)
Equipment 2 tridents

Arctic Sahuagin Priest **Level 13 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 800

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision
HP 101; **Bloodied** 50
AC 25; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 25, **Will** 26
Resist 10 cold
Speed 5 (7 on a charge, ice walk), swim 5 (7 on a charge)

Longspear (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +17 (+18 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 (1d10 + 6 to a bloodied target) damage plus 1d8 cold damage, and the target slides 1 square.

Freezing Bolt (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 (2d6 + 8 to a bloodied target) cold damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the arctic sahuagin priest's next turn.

Arctic Jaws (standard; recharges when no target is affected by this power) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 20; icy shark jaws appear and bite the target; +18 (+19 against a bloodied target) vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 (2d6 + 8 to a bloodied target) cold damage, and target gains vulnerable 5 cold and is slowed (save ends both).

Blood Frenzy
The arctic sahuagin priest gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +15
Str 16 (+9) **Dex** 18 (+10) **Wis** 20 (+11)
Con 16 (+9) **Int** 12 (+7) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment trident, holy symbol, frozen kelp robe

Arctic Sahuagin Baron **Level 15 Elite Brute (Leader)**
Large natural humanoid (cold, aquatic) XP 2,400

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +8; low-light vision
Blood Healing (**Healing**) aura 10; any ally within the aura that starts its turn adjacent to a bloodied enemy regains 5 hit points.
HP 360; **Bloodied** 180
AC 27; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 27
Resist 10 cold
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5 (7 on a charge; ice walk), swim 7 (9 on a charge)
Action Points 1

Trident (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
Reach 2; +18 (+20 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 (1d10 + 12 against a bloodied target) damage plus 1d10 cold damage; see also *blood hunger*.

Bloodchill Claw (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 2; +18 (+20 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 (1d6 + 12 against a bloodied target) damage, and ongoing 5 cold damage and the target is slowed (save ends both).

Javelin (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Ranged 10/20; +18 (+20 against a bloodied target) vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 (2d8 + 12 against a bloodied target) damage.

Baron's Fury (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Weapon**
The arctic sahuagin baron makes a trident attack and two claw attacks.

Blood Hunger
The arctic sahuagin baron gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +5 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common
Skills Intimidate +15
Str 22 (+13) **Dex** 18 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+8)
Con 18 (+11) **Int** 12 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+10)
Equipment trident, 3 javelins, headdress

Arctic Dire Shark **Level 14 Skirmisher**
Huge natural beast (aquatic, mount) XP 1,000
Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +9
HP 139; **Bloodied** 69
AC 28; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 23
Resist 10 cold
Speed swim 10 (12 on a charge)
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+17 (+19 against creatures without a swim speed) vs. AC; 3d6 + 5 damage.
Deft Swimmer (while mounted by a friendly rider of 14th level or higher; at-will) ✦ **Mount**
The dire shark's rider gains a +2 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks. While in water, the rider also gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against creatures without a swim speed.
Waterborn
While in water, the dire shark gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against creatures without a swim speed.
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 21 (+12) **Dex** 24 (+14) **Wis** 14 (+9)
Con 19 (+11) **Int** 2 (+3) **Cha** 9 (+6)

CHILLREAVER

Chillreaver is a mighty two-headed white dragon and exarch of Tiamat that originally laired in the lands north of the Winterbole Forest. There, he made the berserker barbarian tribes run in fear and fought the frost giant jarl to claim control over their clans.

Under the command of his Dark Queen, he set his four eyes on Nefelus, where he was tasked with bringing woe to the prosperous island nation. He soon acquired a means to allow him to accomplish his ruinous plans from the fomorian king Cachlain—an artifact known as the *Seed of Winter*. He is determined to make the most of his time with the artifact, and if he can, find a way to keep the *Seed* in service to his queen.

He has unlocked power in the *Seed* that none other can claim; his essence is in perfect concordance with the *Seed's* wishes, and it fuels his desire for conquest and ruin upon those who seek warmth and comfort. Crippling Nefelus and bringing the chill of winter will allow the dragon to mount an attack on the island itself.

Personality

Chillreaver has a vicious, brutal mind. Above all, he revels in the suffering of others at his command. He aspires to lay waste to lands and turn them into arctic deserts, to kill the warmth of the summer, and to turn joy into grief and loss. Chillreaver is, in many ways, the dark parts of winter personified.

The two-headed dragon also loves to subjugate others and would want nothing more than to rule over a continent of sentient creatures that he could endlessly and mercilessly exploit for his own cruel whims. He hopes to begin that dream with Nefelus.

For all his aspirations, Chillreaver is not without a practical side. He has assembled a number of allies to his cause, promising to those he cannot directly control a small claim to his soon-to-be massive resource gain. He values strong, unwavering loyalty to him and his "Dark Queen's" cause, and he reluctantly acknowledges those that aid his efforts. Of course, he'll ultimately be thinking about the long-term prospects of claiming his allies' resources even as he prepares to support them in battle.

Lore

Arcana or Religion DC 25: Chillreaver is a powerful, two-headed white dragon legendary in the north. He is also particularly blessed by Tiamat, who gave him his second head, and serves as one of her exarchs.

Chillreaver, Exarch of Tiamat **Level 17 Solo Soldier**
Huge natural magical beast (dragon) XP 8,000
Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +17; darkvision
Chillwrath Aura (Cold) aura 2; each square within the aura costs enemies 1 extra square of movement to enter.
HP 845; **Bloodied** 422; see also *bloodied breath*
AC 33; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 29, **Will** 29
Resist 25 cold, 10 poison
Saving Throws +5; see *two-headed*
Speed 8 (ice walk), fly 8 (hover), overland flight 12
Action Points 2
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 plus 2d6 cold damage, plus 2d6 cold damage on an opportunity attack or against an immobilized target.
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage, and the target is pulled 2 squares.
Chillreaver's Fury (standard; at-will)
Chillreaver makes a bite attack and a claw attack.
Deep Freeze (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Cold**
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 cold damage, ongoing 10 cold damage, and the target is immobilized and dazed (save ends all). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of Chillreaver's next turn.
Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Cold**
Close blast 5; +21 vs. Reflex; 6d6 + 7 cold damage, and the target is immobilized and dazed (save ends both). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed until the end of Chillreaver's next turn.
Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ✦ **Cold**
Chillreaver's breath weapon recharges, and he uses it immediately.
Frightful Presence (standard; encounter) ✦ **Fear**
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +21 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of Chillreaver's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).
Threatening Reach
Chillreaver can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within his reach (3 squares).
Two-Headed
Chillreaver rolls initiative twice, and receives two full turns during a round. He rolls for recharge on each of his turns. Each time Chillreaver becomes dazed or stunned, or suffers from an effect that has the charm keyword, that effect ends at the end of his next turn.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Arcana +15, Athletics +24
Str 22 (+14) **Dex** 16 (+11) **Wis** 17 (+11)
Con 26 (+16) **Int** 14 (+10) **Cha** 14 (+10)

Appendix 2: New Magic Items and Rituals

Elemental Prism

One of the many secrets of Nefelus, an *elemental prism* allows its user to convert one element to another.

Elemental Prism **Level 16**

This flickering prism focuses elemental power and converts it to a different element, bathing you in a protective glow.

Wondrous Item 45,000 gp
Power (Encounter): Free Action. Use this power when you make an attack that deals acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison, or thunder damage. Change all your attack's damage to a different type of your choice among those above. You gain resist 15 to your attack's original damage type until the end of your next turn.

Solace Bole

You transport yourself and your companions to the hollow of an enormous tree trunk in the Feywild. While you're there, time passes slowly in the place you once were.

Level: 12
Category: Travel
Time: 10 minutes (see below)
Duration: 1 hour (see below)
Component Cost: 500 gp
Market Price: 2,600 gp
Key Skill: Arcana (no check)

You and up to five other creatures you designate within 10 squares of you are transported to a sealed hollow the size of a comfortable room within a magical tree in the Feywild. The hollow has a glowing light you can control and is filled with sweet air. You can remain within the bole for up to 12 hours. Thereafter, or when you will it to be so, you and all the creatures the ritual took to the hollow return to the exact place they left. Only 1 hour of time has passed in the world. If you took an extended rest within the bole, you must wait 12 hours after your return to the world to take another one.

If you have assistance when performing this ritual, divide the casting time by the number of participants. The assistants all chant in a fey harmony while you perform the ritual. Anyone you want to assist you in this way can learn the proper harmony during an extended rest.

The Seed of Winter

The *Seed of Winter* is appropriate for paragon-level characters.

Seed of Winter **Paragon Level**

This outsized, pearlescent acorn is one of the fabled artifacts of the Winter Court of the Feywild. It is a potent reminder of the power the fey can hold over the environment.

The *Seed of Winter* is a +3 *implement* that acts as either a wand or a totem, and possesses the following properties.
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +3d6 cold damage, or +3d10 cold damage against creatures with the fire keyword
Property: You gain a +2 item bonus to Endurance checks and Intimidate checks.
Property: You gain ice walk.
Property: Enemies take a -2 penalty to saving throws against your powers that have the charm or fear keyword.
Power (At-Will ✦ Arcane, Cold, Implement): Standard Action. You can use *ray of frost* (wizard 1). You can use Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma for the attack roll.
Power (Encounter ✦ Arcane, Cold, Implement): Standard Action. You can use *winter's wrath* (wizard 7). You can use Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma for the attack roll.
Power (Daily ✦ Cold, Implement, Primal, Reliable): Standard Action. You can use *devouring ice* (druid 15). You can use Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma for the attack roll.

Goals of the Seed of Winter

- ✦ Bring the touch of winter to even the most sweltering climes.
- ✦ Oppose the agents of the Summer Fey and elemental fire.
- ✦ Demand obedience from the weak and frail.
- ✦ Be reunited with the Winter Court.

Roleplaying the Seed of Winter

The *Seed of Winter* communicates in a harsh female voice, which leaves an echo reminiscent of tinkling glass. It issues demands to its owner, and screams with rage when it is not obeyed. The more the user obeys the seed, the more he or she becomes aloof, cold, and authoritarian, willing to resort to harsh means to accomplish any task. Some say that the *Seed of Winter* contains the resonance of an archfey who once lived in the Winter Court.

Concordance

Starting Score	5
Owner gains a level	+1d10
Owner is a creature with the cold keyword	+2
Owner has at least one power with the cold keyword	+1
Owner kills a creature with the fire keyword (1/day)	+1
Owner dominates or intimidates a creature (1/day)	+1
Owner refuses the *Seed* (2/day)	-1
Owner or an ally kills a creature with the cold keyword (1/day)	-2
Owner frees a creature from mental control (1/day)	-2

Pleased (16–20)

"The Seed *and I shall bring forth the icy grip of obedience to those who try to deny us."*

Harsh, dominating, and cold, the wielder and the *Seed* are one with each other.

The *Seed's* enhancement bonus increases to +4.
Critical: +4d6 cold damage, or +4d10 cold damage against creatures with the fire keyword
Property: You gain resist 10 cold.
Power (Daily ✦ Charm): Minor Action. An enemy within 5 squares of you makes a melee basic attack against an adjacent target of your choice.

Satisfied (12–15)

"The Seed and I prepare the weak for the bitter times ahead."

The wielder has proven worthy to possess the *Seed*, which grows more sated with each cold victory.

Property: You gain resist 5 cold.
Power (Encounter): Free Action. You can use this power when you hit an enemy with a power that slows the target. That enemy is immobilized instead.

Normal (5–11)

"The Seed asks only for my loyalty and to follow its wisdom."

The *Seed* makes only occasional demands of its wielder, but if such demands are not followed, it is prone to outbursts of anger.

Unsatisfied (1–4)

"The Seed chides me at every turn, wearing on my will. Nothing I do ever pleases it."

The wielder is being forgiving to others or refrains from bringing winter to the warm. The *Seed* is in a perpetual state of negative emotion, constantly judging the wielder or screaming in rage.

Property: You take a –2 penalty to your Will.
Special: You gain vulnerable 5 fire.

Angered (0 or lower)

"No! Leave me be! I have only cold sorrow now."

Howling with fury, the *Seed* crushes the wearer's spirit and demands to be passed on to someone with a stronger will.

The *Seed*'s enhancement bonus drops to +2.
Critical: +2d6 cold damage, or +2d10 cold damage against creatures with the fire keyword
Property: You take a –4 penalty to your Will.
Special: You gain vulnerable 10 fire.
Special: Whenever you would be slowed, you are immobilized instead.

Moving On

"The wintry reaches of the Feywild call again to the Seed."

The *Seed of Winter* eventually tires of the mortal world and its "civilized" ways, and returns to the possession of a creature of the Feywild to renew its ancient energy. If the *Seed* is at least satisfied, it leaves behind an implement of cold of the user's choice.

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the D&D® Organized Play Content Developer, responsible for the development and deployment of Dungeons & Dragons® organized play programs. He is also the co-author of E2 *Kingdom of the Ghouls*™.

HEROIC

1–10

Remains of the Empire

by Kolja Raven Liquette

An adventure for 3rd-level characters

Elkridge is a pleasant, peaceful valley, home to a community of farmers and artisans unaccustomed to the ways of violence. When wild drakes descend on the valley, attacking livestock and citizens alike, the locals need the help of experienced warriors for protection. Beyond the immediate need for defense is the larger question of where these creatures come from, why they are attacking the valley, and how it's all connected to the region's dim past.

illustrations by David Martin, Ben Wootten, and Warren Mahy

cartography by Mike Schley

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Remains of the Empire exposes the characters to an obscure breed of drake, thought by some to be extinct. These drakes lead characters to the ruins of a flying citadel atop a haunted summit. A dragonborn zealot, seeking to restore the glory of fallen Arkhosia, has turned to Zehir for strength and guidance.

Remains of the Empire is a 4th Edition D&D® adventure designed to take five 3rd level characters to 4th level. The story offers the chance to tame a drake, disperse a mob, parley with undead, and battle within an alpine meadow that defies gravity. *Remains of the Empire* can be inserted into any campaign setting.

Adventure Background

Long ago, when the Dragonborn Empire of Arkhosia thrived, Ustraternes, one of many airborne dragonborn citadels, was undone. Tiefling wizards unraveled the magic that levitated the dragonborn fortresses high above the clouds and began bringing them down. One by one, the floating citadels fell to earth. When Ustraternes crashed into an alpine peak, it cracked open like an egg, scattering the sundered pieces in all directions. The mountain thereafter became known as Morningfall Summit, its original name erased from history.

Adventure Synopsis

The story begins with the characters passing through a peasant region plagued with warwing drakes. Most of these drakes seem driven by hunger, with two exceptions; one is inquisitive and playful while the other has learned rudimentary speech and is badly injured. Skill challenges allow the party to befriend the docile drake and prevent angry villagers from killing the dying one. The clues that surround these warwing drakes, including the remains of a dragonborn rider, all point toward the same direction: the top of Morningfall Summit.

While climbing the one-mile-high peak, the characters discover a cave occupied by two shadowhunter bats and a nest of pestilent vermin.

On reaching the summit, the characters behold the remains of Ustraternes for the first time. The initial impact of the flying city turned an alpine meadow into a craterous valley. Pieces of floating debris hover in mid-air throughout the vale, along with a floating tower that must have been launched skyward after the crash.

Halfway into the valley, the characters encounter the original inhabitants of Ustraternes: specters long dead who guard the remains of their fallen citadel. A dragonborn shadow named Vrak Tiburcaex reluctantly serves a living descendant named Bejik Vuthaner, a Zehir-touched dragonborn. A skill challenge can convince Vrak to change her allegiance, but she requires proof that she is not related to Bejik. She fights the party and retreats when her undead brethren are defeated, either to alert Bejik about the characters or to brood and say nothing.

Approaching the bottom of the valley, the characters encounter either patrolling dragonborn or a single dragonborn who claims to be trapped on the summit (depending on whether Vrak alerted these guards). If possible, they lure the party into an ambush, attacking from below, above, and on the back of a warwing drake. If their trap is revealed early, the dragonborn attack without surprise.

With that threat dispatched, the characters are free to explore the floating tower. They find pickaxes, shovels, and a counterfeit patent of nobility that links Vrak Tiburcaex to Bejik Vuthaner. On the ground, a site is discovered with an entranceway excavated under the largest mound of sundered masonry.

The characters explore into the ruins of the once floating citadel and find an original courtyard, preserved under a precarious ceiling of walls and towers that collapsed against each other. This is where Bejik Vuthaner studies the ancient texts uncovered in the ruins, plots his road to renewed glory, and casts rituals to bind the warwing drakes. He seeks to eliminate the current inhabitants of the region and carve out his own fiefdom devoted to the worship of Zehir. To this end, he deliberately releases his magically bound warwing drakes to prey upon the local villagers. In his quest to restore the airborne cavalry of Arkhosia, Bejik struck a pact with Zehir that left him horribly deformed. The dragonborn would claim that he has been "perfected," having embraced his new visage as a viper.

To gain access to the underground ruins, Bejik deceived the ghost Vrak into believing that he descended from her noble family. If the original patent of nobility is presented to Vrak during the final battle, she will either turn on Bejik and side with the characters, or collapse the ruins on top of everybody. This result provokes a skill challenge to escape the buried courtyard while the final battle takes place under falling rubble.

Remains of the Empire is a standalone adventure that can be developed into a longer tale of espionage and intrigue, maintaining Bejik Vuthaner as a recurring villain whose influence grows over time and attracts yuan-ti followers and snaketongue cultists with his Zehir-touched appearance.

Detectives, They're Not

If the characters are not interested in detective work, it falls on the dungeon master to make the discontent of Vrak palpably obvious. She is unhappy serving Bejik but does so out of a sense of familial loyalty from beyond the grave. Even without presenting the forged patent of nobility to Vrak, perhaps she can still be persuaded to change sides at the last minute through honorable or merciful actions, qualities she highly respects.

Adventure Hooks

The characters travel to an idyllic peasant region of Elkridge, known for foreign ales, exotic bazaars, and relaxing atmosphere. Instead, the normally peaceful area is rife with nervous activity. The seasonal festivities that usually take place during this time have all been suspended. Something has spooked the peasantry into battening down the hatches, but it doesn't take much to loosen their tongues. A plague of flying drakes has befallen the region, and nobody knows where they come from or why.

Countryside in Peril

The peasant region is beautifully serene, offering placid lakes, rolling hills, and few metropolitan comforts. The village of Elkridge, home to only the most essential professions, was once protected by a caretaking warlord in search of peace and quiet. Since he died, the village has been well maintained but is now vulnerable to attack. For this reason more than any other, the villagers of Elkridge find themselves completely unprepared for conflict. The fact that cottages are so widely spread throughout the region, rather than centralized in one place, only makes this problem worse.

Regardless of whether the characters are passing through the area or have made this locality their destination, read the following aloud:

As the village of Elkridge looms ahead, you can't help but notice the lack of festival banners and widespread mirth that usually characterizes this region. Country folk that normally swarm the arrival of friendly adventurers are too busy boarding up their homes to pay you any notice. A rare glance is spared, but little else.

Peasants Taste Good

The characters can speak to any number of cottage-dwellers fortifying their homes. They describe a plague of flying beasts laying siege to the area, but any further conversation is interrupted.

Tactical Encounter: V1: Peasants Taste Good (page 61).

Why They're Here

The reason for exploring the peasant region can be no more complicated than heroes seeking downtime, to the much more specific search for a fallen dragonborn citadel. Perhaps the characters heard about a disturbance in the countryside that the locals cannot manage, or maybe they approached the community oblivious, hired to protect a merchant caravan that frequents the region. Each dungeon master will know best how to dovetail this adventure into their campaign with the least amount of shoe-horning.

Quest XP: The task of locating the source of the warwing drakes rewards each character with 150 XP. As well, the characters will forevermore receive accommodation and food in this region for free, they can stake a claim to their own plots of land without cost or formality, and they will be gifted with a basket of *Everlasting Provisions* if they succeed in ending the threat.

Taming the Docile Beast

After the characters finish negotiating with Mavros, a village alarm is sounded.

A young boy runs into the village out of breath. "My father is dead ... and the beast is still there!"

The boy will lead the characters back to a small cluster of cottages 1 mile away. The cottages are boarded up but unscathed.

A warwing drake, equipped with a saddle and saddle bags, idly paws at a body on the ground. The distraught boy indicates that the man is his father.

A DC 10 Perception check from up to 10 squares (50 feet) away determines that the man is not dead but unconscious. The man is stout for a human, equal in build to a dragonborn. Before the characters can attack, the warwing drake becomes distracted by a passing butterfly and flits along in its wake, leaving the injured farmer alone and apparently unconcerned about the PCs.

Skill Challenge: V2: Taming the Docile Beast (page 63)

The Higher They Fall

Any character who tracks the warwing drake out of the forest (Perception DC 10) finds a trail leading back to the corpse of a chain-armored dragonborn. The drake's tracks disappear at this point, as if the creature landed here. Alternatively, the body can be located with a DC 15 passive Perception check to notice carrion birds circling over a section of the forest. Traveling to the area below the carrion birds locates the body.

The corpse is sunken face down into a body-shaped depression in the ground. A DC 10 Heal check determines that the dragonborn body must have fallen from a great height to have pressed into the ground this way. The dragonborn's armor is destroyed, but tatters of torn cloth are snagged in the links of mail. Coins are scattered everywhere from a belt pouch that split open (see Treasure, below).

Searching the body produces a map of the region. A DC 15 Nature check identifies aerial routes to and from a nearby mountain (Morningfall Summit). Wherever the aerial routes approach inhabited areas, they swing wide and avoid stretches where a flyer could be spotted easily.

A DC 15 Perception check locates a tabard 25 feet up in a tree. If retrieved, the tabard is found to be emblazoned with a symbol of a serpent. A DC 10 Religion check reveals this is the symbol of Zehir.

Treasure: 48 gp, 14 sp, 6 cp.

Villagers on the Rampage

Returning to the village, the characters encounter Mavros and several parents marching toward a nearby marsh. On seeing the characters, Mavros approaches the group and speaks on behalf of everybody:

"The teenagers and older children of the village rallied while you were gone. They were anxious before you arrived, but ever since you killed those drakes, they've had bloodlust in their hearts. Someone reported seeing a wounded drake in the marsh near here, and they've all armed themselves however they could and marched off to kill it before any of their parents realized what was going on.

"We're headed out to try to bring them back, but after so much blood and terror, we don't know whether they'll listen to reason. They respect you ... if you could come along, they might listen to you."

With directions to the marsh or a guide to lead them, the characters can race ahead and catch up with the mob of young villagers just as they come into sight of the drake. The crowd is mostly teenage boys and girls ranging from 14 to 17, but some children as young as 8 are with them. All are armed with pitchforks, shovels, rakes, and clubs. They are agitated and angry and heedless of danger in their fervor to attack the creature.

The warwing drake languishes in the marsh, scratching ineffectually at its head. With great effort, the creature hoarsely speaks a few words in Draconic.

"Can't ... stop ... pain. Not ... want ... fight."

A DC 10 Insight check reveals that the drake is delirious with pain. If the characters want to communicate with the drake, they must first stop the teenage villagers from attempting to kill it with farm tools.

Skill Challenge: V3: Villagers on the Rampage (page 64)

The Journey Yonder

Morningfall Summit is visible from anywhere in the region. Its base is 6 miles away from Elkridge. If the characters announce that they are going to climb the mile-high peak, climbing kits and hempen rope will be supplied at no cost. Traveling to the mountain provides another chance for the characters to discover the dragonborn body (see The Higher They Fall, above), if they didn't find it earlier.

Morningfall Summit Rumors

A character knows the following information with a successful Streetwise check after talking with the local peasants and villagers.

DC 5: *The mountain is a dangerous place to which the locals never venture.*

DC 10: *Folklore says that no one who was foolish enough to try to climb the mountain has ever returned.*

DC 15: *Legends speak of ancient spirits who inhabit the peak and consume mountaineers.*

DC 20: *A village elder (Cyril the One-Eyed) claims that his grandfather climbed the mountain in his youth but turned back after spotting dragonborn spirits.*

The Nocturnal Aerie

The alpine peak rises steeply. It can be scaled only with a climber's kit (hooks, hammer, and pitons) and rope, which the villagers will provide. The distance to be climbed is 1,000 squares. The speed of ascent equals the slowest character's climb speed per minute rather than per round. Total climbing times at various speeds are shown on the table. The climb itself is tiring and slow but not especially dangerous. Everyone will reach the peak without mishap; the only variable is how long it takes and whether the climbers are ambushed, as noted below.

Climb Speed	Time Needed
4	4 hrs, 10 mins
3.5	4 hrs, 45 mins
3	5 hrs, 30 mins
2.5	6 hrs, 40 mins
2	8 hrs, 20 mins

As the party ascends Morningfall Summit, they encounter a cave mouth at about the midpoint of the climb. The narrow cave entrance is 6 squares (30 feet) to the left of their climbing route. At this point, each character must make a DC 15 Nature or Perception check. If more characters succeed than fail or the number is tied, then the party can enter the cave without any chance of being surprised by the creatures inside. If more characters fail than succeed, they still notice the cave but stand a chance of being surprised by the creatures inside.

Half-way into your climb, the dizzying view is already enough to make you feel small. Looking ahead, you notice a dark gash in the mountainside, large enough that even the broadest member of your party could squeeze through.

Any character with Nature training notices scratches, scuff marks, and litter near the entrance that indicate some sort of habitation. If the characters ignore the cave, continue to At the Peak. If they pause to investigate, they trigger the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: S1: "The Nocturnal Aerie" (page 65).

At the Peak

After an exhausting climb, the characters pull themselves over the final ridge of Morningfall Summit. The alpine valley stretches in a bowl shape that is about one-half mile (500 squares) in diameter and 600 feet (120 squares) deep. The valley walls are steep near the rim but rapidly become less severe. The ground slopes downward everywhere, but once characters descend 50-60 feet from the lip, the incline is noticeable but managable.

You have not even begun to stow your climbing gear after pulling yourself over the final ridge when the name of this mountain suddenly takes on new meaning. The bowl-shaped valley that opens beneath you is littered with massive pieces of sundered marble and stonework overgrown with bushes, moss, and trees. The debris is not merely scattered across the ground but suspended in midair throughout the valley, as if frozen in place and weathered over a millennia. Not even the passage of time can disguise the catastrophic event that must have taken place here. Pieces of elaborate architecture, both embedded in the ground and hovering above it, radiate upward and outward from the lowest point in the valley. The most prominent edifice amongst the airborne flotsam is a nearly undamaged tower near the bottom of the valley but well above the surface. To see more than that, you will need to investigate from a closer distance.

Morningfall Summit Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Nature check.

DC 15: *The alpine valley did not form naturally, but resulted from an enormous impact.*

Dragonborn Citadel Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful History check after studying the debris for 10 minutes. If the characters study the debris for the better part of an hour, a second History check is permitted, but the dragonborn in the valley below will become aware of their presence.

DC 5: *The designs and artwork etched into the marble and stonework is dragonborn in origin.*

DC 10: *The debris shares many qualities in common with ancient dragonborn architecture.*

Floating Debris Properties

Characters can stand within reach of floating debris at any elevation within the valley. Individual chunks remain fixed at a specific height. In general, the larger the chunk, the closer it is to the crater floor, but there is much variation. The pieces are Tiny near the peak of Morningfall Summit but become progressively larger as they near the bottom of the valley. Floating debris that is removed from the valley or repositioned over the edge of Morningfall Summit is immediately subject to gravity.

The floating debris can be mapped in three dimensions. Roll 1, 2, or 3d10 (as shown on the table) for every relevant 3x3 area on the map. The number on each d10 roll corresponds to which 5-foot cube in the 3x3 area contains a chunk of floating debris (starting from the upper left corner of the 3x3 area and numbering across to the opposite corner). If a 10 is rolled, no debris is present for that roll. The size of each chunk is determined by rolling 1d6. Repeat for every *relevant* 3x3 area and 5-foot increase in elevation. (It's not necessary to map the debris field in the entire crater. The specific arrangement of debris matters in only a few instances.)

Height Above Crater Floor	Chunks per 3x3 Area	Size of Chunk
0-40 feet	3	**1-2: Tiny** (3-6 inches cubed) **3-4: Small** (1-2 feet cubed) **5-6: Medium** (3 feet cubed)
40-80 feet	2	**1-3: Tiny** **4-6: Small**
80-120 feet	1	**Always Tiny**

Tiny debris can support up to 250 lb.; small debris can support up to 500 lb.; and Medium debris can support up to 1,000 lb. before shifting down at the speed of 1 square per round (per increment of weight being supported). A piece of floating debris can be pulled or pushed at half speed on a horizontal plane as a move action or 5 squares with *mage hand* as a move action.

A character who fights or takes damage while perched on a piece of Tiny debris grants combat advantage until the start of their next turn, must use their move action to balance, and makes a DC 15 Acrobatics check to avoid slipping over the edge. A character who fights or takes damage on a piece of Small debris grants combat advantage until the start of their next turn and makes a DC 10 Acrobatics check to avoid slipping. A character can fight and take damage on a piece of Medium debris without penalty.

A character who slips over the edge gets an immediate chance to catch himself as if bull-rushed over the edge (*Player's Handbook* page 284). If that fails, he falls 10 feet and slams into another chunk of debris (either place one randomly or choose the nearest, suitable piece), takes 1d10 damage, and has another chance to catch the edge. This continues until the character either catches hold of something, hits the ground, or reaches 0 hit points and plummets the rest of the way down. At each stage of the fall, a character trained in Acrobatics can make a check to reduce the falling damage (*Player's Handbook* 181).

DC 15: *The marble and stonework match the flying citadels built by dragonborn at the height of their now extinct empire. These citadels were foiled by tiefling wizards who unwove the magic that kept them aloft, killing thousands in the resulting crashes.*

DC 20: *The debris belongs to Ustraternes (The City of Flying Stone), which crashed in a remote and unknown region. This particular citadel housed and transported elite dragonborn soldiers. Its downfall was said to portend the end of Arkhosia.*

The Restless Guardians

Regardless of the direction that characters take, they eventually come across a perimeter of crumbling statues half-way into the valley.

Your descent into the valley is steep regardless of the direction you take. About halfway down, the geography forms a natural spur that juts out from the slope. On it stands an ancient statue of a dragonborn warrior, propped up rather than lying broken on the ground. Similar spurs ring the entire circumference of the valley at this elevation, one about every 40 feet, and a similar statue stands on each.

The dragonborn statues have been erected deliberately about 8 squares (40 feet) apart to create a ring of stones at this elevation (100 statues in total).

Moving within 6 squares of the statue perimeter causes a phantom dragonborn to emerge from within the closest statue and address the characters.

Skill Challenge: S3: "Ghost of a Chance" (page 69).

Tactical Encounter: S2: "The Restless Guardians" (page 67).

Development

If the characters succeed at the Ghost of a Chance skill challenge, Vrak Tiburcaex will keep their presence in the valley to herself. Otherwise, she retreats to alert Bejik Vuthaner and the other dragonborn about the intruders. Either way, Vrak honorably defends Bejik until shown evidence that proves they have no family connection.

The Floating Tower

After venturing beyond the statue perimeter, they eventually approach the floating tower at the bottom of the valley.

As the valley levels off, the thinning trees gives way to larger pieces of marble, both in the air and on the ground. The overgrown stonework increases in quantity and size until all the debris merges with an enormous mound of rubble at the bottom of the valley. The tower hovers 100 feet above the ground here. There is an entrance at the bottom of the tower with no door.

As the characters descend to the bottom of the valley, they have a unique opportunity to observe the floating tower from a distance. See the Reaching the Floating Tower sidebar and increase the DC of any active Perception checks by +2 to account for range.

Tactical Encounter: S4: "The Floating Tower" (page 70).

The Ruined Citadel

Exploring around the rubble mound reveals an excavated area that has been cleared and flattened. This is also revealed to characters who climb atop the floating citadel and survey the valley from there. All tracks in the excavated area converge on a large marble slab that has been recently moved. A character can make a DC 15 Strength check to move the slab and reveal a roughly hewn, vertical shaft with handholds; 30 feet down, it drops into a level passageway. Moving into this passageway triggers a trap.

Reaching the Floating Tower

Characters can climb up to the tower with a grappling hook and rope by latching onto a Small or Medium piece of floating debris (AC 8 or AC 10 respectively). To determine the closest piece of Small or Medium floating debris, see the Floating Debris Properties sidebar (page 57). Treat the grappling hook as an improvised heavy thrown weapon with a range of 5/10.

If the characters climb to the top of the rubble mound, they recognize that the floating debris forms a winding path 20 squares long leading up to the tower. Characters who look for such a path may locate these repositioned stones from below (Perception DC 15). No skill check is required to ascend the path of floating debris, but having an Acrobatics modifier of 5 or more means that characters do not grant combat advantage while negotiating this path.

Special: If the characters successfully negotiated with Vrak Tiburcaex (see the Ghost of a Chance skill challenge, page 69) so that none of the dragonborn brigands or dragonborn snipers had enough time to warn Bejik about the characters, then the stone slab has not been dragged into place to hide the entrance shaft.

Poison Mist	Level 4 Lurker
Trap	XP 175

A weakened section of floor breaks under the weight of a creature, smashing a flask of volatile liquid underneath.

Trap: The unstable liquid reacts quickly when exposed to air and billows upward as a gas.

Perception

- ✦ **DC 10:** The character notices that the floor feels soft underfoot.
- ✦ **DC 15:** The character notices that a section of floor has been dug up or disturbed.

Initiative +2

Trigger

When a creature moves across the weakened section of floor.

Attack

Standard Action **Close burst** 1

Target: Creatures in burst

Attack: +7 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 1d6 + 4 poison damage.

Effect: The triggering creature is immobilized (save ends). Any creature that enters the cloud or starts their turn there takes 5 poison damage. The mist provides concealment and blocks line of sight for creatures inside it. The cloud persists until the end of encounter or for 5 minutes.

Countermeasures

- ✦ A character can make a DC 15 Acrobatics check to balance across the weakened area.
- ✦ A character can make a DC 5 Athletics check (DC 10 without a running start) to jump over the weakened area.
- ✦ An adjacent character who notices the weakened floor can make a DC 15 Thievery check to disable the trap without breaking the flask of poisonous gas. A Thievery check of 12 or less triggers the trap.
- ✦ Any melee attack against the weakened floor triggers the trap.

If the characters set off the poison mist trap, they have ample time to spend healing surges and recover from any damage before proceeding. If Bejik and his servants haven't already been warned about the characters, then triggering the trap alerts them that intruders are in the corridor and they use this time to get into ambush positions.

If characters bypass the trap without setting it off, make a mental note of that. The trap will still be live when it comes time to evacuate the underground chamber. In the chaos that's likely to occur, someone might set it off in their haste to escape.

A corridor continues beyond the trapped area and emerges through the back of a stone wall into a gutted tower, the upper floor of which is partially choked with rubble. Looking through the wide, doorless entranceway or either of the paneless windows reveals the following.

An ancient courtyard opens before you, sheltered under a roof of sundered marble and the mound of rubble above. Two now-buried stone towers have toppled against each other to create a precarious ceiling. The broken architecture supports the full weight of the ruins above, keeping an avalanche at bay. Lanterns flicker throughout the area, illuminating broken statues on the ground. The base of the tower opposite the one you occupy is closed off by wooden doors that appear to be newly repaired.

Tactical Encounter: S5: "The Ruined Citadel" (page 73).

Hazard: "Collapsing Ceiling" (page 75).

Mindshape Warwing Drake

Like the dragonborn beastmasters of old, you instantly tame a warwing drake with a violent burst of psychic energy.

Level: 5
Category: Creation (see text)
Time: 1 Hour
Duration: Permanent
Component Cost: 100 gp
Market Price: 250 gp
Key Skill: Arcana or Nature

To perform this ritual, you require a single warwing drake bound inside a magic circle drawn to bind a natural creature. When you successfully perform this ritual, the warwing drake is tamed as determined by your Arcana or Nature check result.

Check Result	Effect on Warwing Drake
7 or lower	-4 Int; attacks all other creatures.
8-13	-2 Int; still wild.
14-19	-1 Int; tame and trained.
20-25	Tame and trained.
26 or higher	Tame and trained; can speak

A tame and trained warwing drake is ready to accept a rider and riding gear, and it understands commands. It is loyal to the ritual caster or someone the ritual caster designates. Such a drake can be trained to accept other potential riders and masters. If the ritual grants the drake the ability to speak, the drake speaks in a broken form of a language the ritual caster selects.

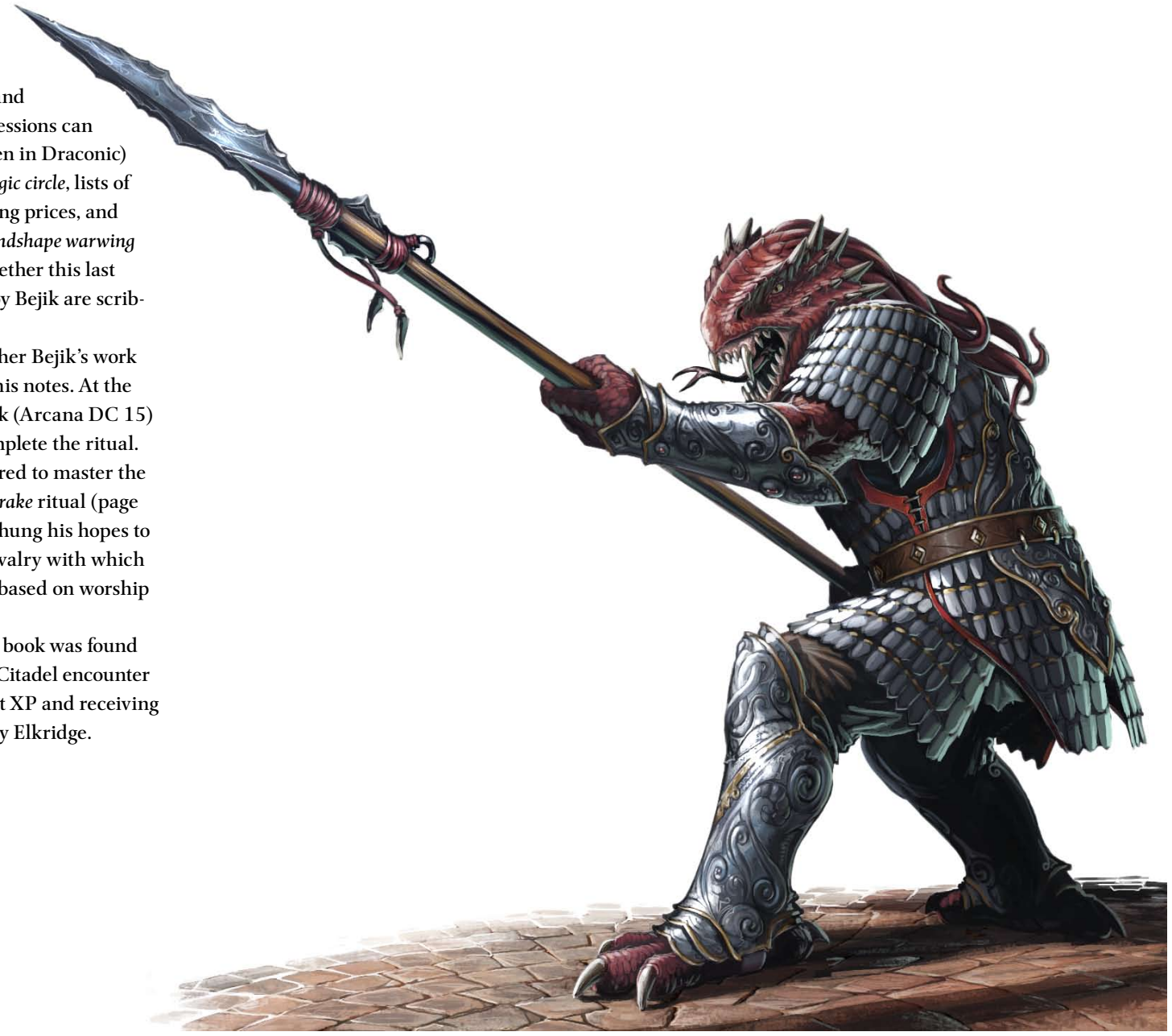
If use of this ritual reduces a warwing drake to 0 Intelligence, the drake dies.

Conclusion

If Vrak changed her allegiance to side with the characters and the party subsequently defeated Bejik and his servants, the dragonborns' possessions can be looted. Bejik's ritual book (written in Draconic) includes *arcane lock*, *brew potion*, *magic circle*, lists of dragonborn artifacts and their selling prices, and pages of an ancient ritual called *mindshape warwing drake*. It's not immediately clear whether this last ritual is complete; extensive notes by Bejik are scribbled in the margins.

A character attempting to decipher Bejik's work must first spend 8 hours studying his notes. At the end of that period, a decipher check (Arcana DC 15) shows that Bejik's research did complete the ritual. Another 8 hours of study are required to master the ritual. See the *mindshape warwing drake* ritual (page 77). It was on this ritual that Bejik hung his hopes to create a force of drake-mounted cavalry with which to carve out a dragonborn fiefdom based on worship of Zehir.

Regardless of whether the ritual book was found by the party, surviving the Ruined Citadel encounter warrants being awarded with Quest XP and receiving all the associated benefits offered by Elkridge.



VI: Peasants Taste Good

Encounter Level 2 (525 XP)

Setup

3 warwing drakes (D)

A group of feral warwing drakes are trying to tear through a thatched cottage that has not yet been fortified. Two parents and their daughter are huddled inside the cottage. The warwing drakes will fly off with any peasant they kill to eat without distraction. A drake that breaks through the wall will reach inside and start flailing around with a claw, like a cat trying to snatch a mouse.

The bloodcurdling scream of a young woman echoes from a nearby glen. A peasant yells out, "That's the farmer's wife! He ran out of wood to board up his house this morning!" A bestial screech comes next, gripping the villagers with fear and rooting them to the ground. The sound of claws raking through timbered planks is unmistakable, coupled with the excited flapping of leathery wings. The creature is nearby and eager to feed.

Tactics

One warwing drake is tearing up the cottage roof, another is trying to break through a shuttered window, and the third is clawing at a nearby animal shelter. The characters can attempt to surprise these drakes from the treeline with ranged attacks or charge into melee.

If a warwing drake is not damaged by a ranged attack, it continues breaking into the cottage or shelter. A warwing drake will give its undivided attention to anybody who attacks at melee range. After that, the drakes target characters with flyby attacks and land to use bite attacks only if a target maintains cover.

3 Warwing Drakes (D)	**Level 4 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount, reptile)	XP 175
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +10	
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16	
Immune fear (while flying)	
Speed 8, fly 8, overland flight 12; see also *flyby attack*	
m **Bite** (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.	
M **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage	
M **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The warwing drake flies up to 8 squares and makes two claw attacks at any point during that movement. The drake doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from a target of either attack.	
Fearless Flight (while flying and mounted by a friendly rider of 4th level or higher; no action) **Mount**	
Attackers can't target the warwing drake's rider when the drake's movement provokes opportunity attacks.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –	
Skills Athletics +11	
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+2)	

Development

The drake bodies are not marked or adorned with any equipment. The family and community heartily thank the characters for saving their lives and offer free accommodations, food without charge, and mundane healing. Within an hour, as news of their deed spreads, they are approached by a distinguished, middle-aged human. After thanking them profusely for battling the monsters, he asks if he can speak with them in private. If they agree, he escorts the characters to an Elkridge community hall where a map charts several drake attacks:

"The drakes you dispatched today were only the latest attacks in what has become a plague. Nobody knows why they arrived or from where they originate, but no pattern exists. If I can persuade you to look into this matter further, our entire village will be at your disposal. We live outside the attention of kingdoms and no longer possess the resources to fight this threat ourselves. For that reason alone, I ask you to play the role of champions, if only for a little while."

Anyone trained in Insight confirms that Mavros is earnest and truthful.

Features of the Area

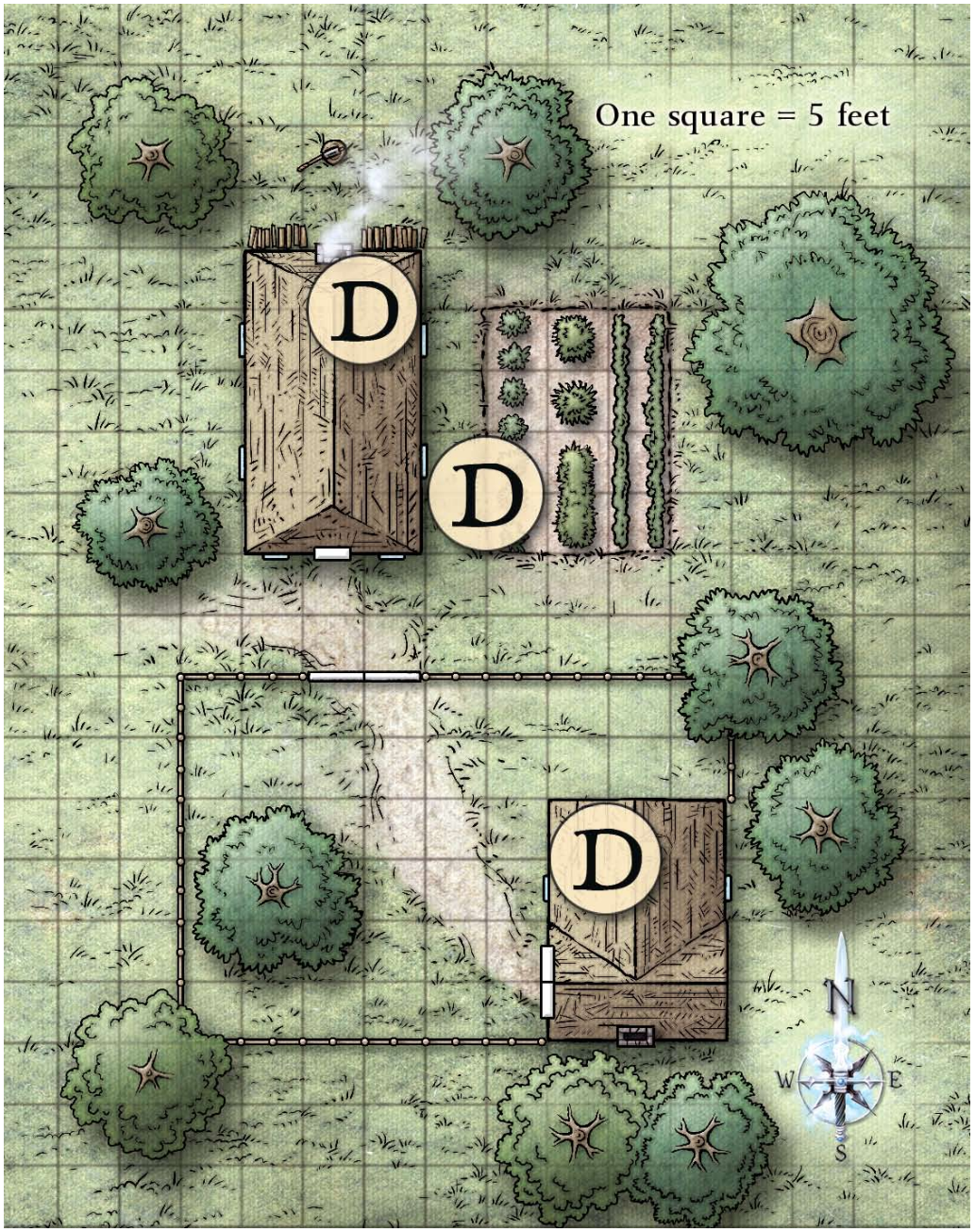
Illumination: Daylight.

Barred Door: The barred cottage door is made from old timbered wood with a break DC of 20.

Barred Window: Perception checks made through a shuttered window take a –5 penalty. Barred windows can be opened as a move action from inside. From outside, they can be forced open with a DC 15 Strength check (a standard action). Open windows provide superior cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to climb through an open window.

Fence: It costs 2 squares of movement to climb over the fence.

Walls: These 6-inch-thick walls are made from heavy timbers. They can be climbed (Athletics DC 15) or broken (DC 25).



V2: Taming the Docile Beast

Encounter Level 5 (400 XP)

Setup

This particular drake has Intelligence 3, no trained Athletics, Insight, or Perception skills, and understands Draconic commands but cannot respond to questions. Attacking the drake at any point ends the skill challenge.

The drake only attacks reactively, whines when it takes damage, and flies 1 mile away after losing 14 hit points. If the drake is encountered afterward, the skill challenge can be restarted no less than 5 minutes later, after which the creature has forgotten being attacked.

With this skill challenge, the characters can try to tame the warwing drake enough to peaceably interact with it.

Taming the Docile Beast **Level 5**
Skill Challenge XP 400

The warwing drake appears both fascinated with the party and weary at the same time, clearly unable to distinguish between friend and foe.

Complexity
2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills
Athletics, Insight, Intimidate, Nature

Success
The characters can freely approach the warwing drake and examine or search the saddle bags worn by the creature. Unless restrained, the drake eventually runs or flies away in search of new curiosities, but it will seek out the characters again at an opportune time.

Failure
The warwing drake, *distracted* by a new curiosity, flies away. The drake will seek out the characters again but at an inconvenient time.

Athletics
DC 15, move action. The first successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge; subsequent successes have no effect.
You excite the warwing drake with rambunctious, playful behavior. Failing this check also results in the drake biting (playfully) at the character as an opportunity attack.

Insight
DC 10, minor action. The first successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge. First success with this skill opens up use of Athletics and Intimidate, and second success reveals that the warwing drake understands Draconic and will respond well to food.
You realize that the warwing drake is completely devoid of malice and responds well to authority or playfulness.

Intimidate
DC 10, standard action. The first successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
You take advantage of the training that the warwing drake has received and issue authoritative commands. Increase the DC by 5 if you do not speak Draconic.

Nature
DC 15, standard action. The first successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
You appeal to the curiosity of the warwing drake, which responds even more favorably when food is offered (+2 bonus when food is offered).

Development

The upper right foreleg of the warwing drake is branded with a symbol of the evil god Zehir. Any character trained in Religion can identify the symbol of Zehir on the drake and on the tabard nearby. This drake wears a metal collar, a saddle, and saddle bags. The warwing drake has been trained to accept only a particular rider (see The Higher They Fall). This quality can be retrained, but with a more difficult skill challenge over a longer period of time. If a character attempts to mount the warwing drake, make a Strength vs. Reflex check while adjacent to the creature. The warwing drake flies to a height of 30 feet and tries to shake off the character with an Athletics vs. Fortitude check.

If the characters heal the unconscious man by activating his healing surge, he speaks of being knocked over by the warwing drake as it bounded out of the forest. It didn't attack him so much as blunder into him playfully, and he was knocked out when his head struck the ground.

Treasure: The saddle bags contain a sturdy antique dagger (250 gp) that dates back to the Dragonborn Empire (History DC 15), a *potion of healing*, and a tonic of antivenom.

V3: Villagers on the Rampage

Encounter Level 4 (525 XP)

Setup

The young villagers have whipped themselves into a fervor to kill the warwing drake. This particular warwing drake has Intelligence 9, is branded with a symbol of the evil god Zehir, and wears a metal collar. It is slowed and weakened by mental seizures. The creature must make one saving throw at the end of each turn to resist both conditions until the end of its next turn.

To begin this skill challenge, the characters must place themselves between the drake and the young villagers. The characters can then pacify the young villagers long enough to interact with the warwing drake.

Villagers on the Rampage **Level 4**
Skill Challenge XP 525

The warwing drake struggles to speak while in physical distress; a weakness the agitated village teenagers seem all too quick to exploit.

Complexity
3 (requires 8 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills
Bluff, Diplomacy, Heal, Intimidate.

Secondary Skills
Insight, Nature.

Success
The characters persuade the villagers to back down and let the party approach the creature instead. The warwing drake is open to communication with any character who speaks Draconic. The creature reveals that it escaped from atop Morningfall Summit, knocked a pursuing dragonborn off another warwing drake, and wasn't always able to speak. The warwing drake can be spoken to more candidly for 5 minutes after this skill challenge ends (see Development).

Developments
If the characters succeed with 1 failure, they persuade the villagers to back down and the warwing drake communicates in Draconic that it escaped from atop Morningfall Summit and knocked a pursuing dragonborn off another warwing drake. The warwing drake can be spoken to more candidly for 2 minutes after this skill challenge ends (see Development).
If the characters succeed with 2 failures, the Warwing drake communicates in Draconic that it escaped from atop Morningfall Summit, then it immediately experiences a mental seizure (see Development).

Failure
The villagers will not be discouraged from their purpose, and they attack the warwing drake. The drake fights back until bloodied, then flies off to die. If the characters intend to speak with the drake, they must subdue the young villagers (unconscious but not dead) to protect them from themselves. The mob of young villagers consists of 15 human rabble (see page 162 of the *Monster Manual*).

Bluff
DC 15, standard action. The first successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge; others have no effect.
You convince the young villagers that there is more to the warwing drake than meets the eye. The creature could be lulling them into a false sense of security before striking.

Diplomacy
Standard action. The first Diplomacy check fails automatically and reveals that Diplomacy will not be effective in this situation.
The young villagers have already worked themselves into a froth and refuse to be calmed with rationality.

Heal
DC 10, standard action. A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge. First success with this skill activates a healing surge and grants the warwing drake enough mental clarity to communicate in Draconic.
You approach the warwing drake without any weapons, showing the villagers that the warwing drake is not malicious.

Insight
DC 10, minor action. A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge. First success with this skill reveals that the young villagers are highly agitated, and second success reveals that any use of the Diplomacy skill earns a failure.
You sense that the villagers are frightened of the warwing drake but want to prove their worth, much as the characters did in combat.

Intimidate
DC 15, standard action. A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
You command the villagers to lay down arms, shame them into protecting their parents, and assert that the party is more qualified to deal with the warwing drake.

Nature
DC 5, standard action. A success on this check does not count as a success on the skill challenge but does grant a +2 bonus on all further Bluff and Intimidate checks until a character fails a Bluff or Intimidate check.
You demonstrate that you and your companions know far more about warwing drakes than the villagers, and this knowledge sways them to pay greater heed to your arguments.

Development

Speaking is painful for the warwing drake, but the creature will answer any question asked in Draconic once the villagers back down. Depending on the degree of success in the skill challenge, the drake dies from a massive mental seizure 5 minutes, 2 minutes, or immediately after the skill challenge ends (time this in real minutes). This time can be stretched by 5 minutes for every healing surge worth of hit points the drake receives, keeping in mind that the one healing surge the warwing drake possessed might have been activated during the skill challenge.

In addition to what was learned during the skill challenge, the warwing drake confirms that it was subjected to brutal training after being captured by dragonborn. When the creature overheard that it was going to be killed, it escaped from atop Morningfall Summit and knocked a pursuing dragonborn off another warwing drake after being wounded in the aerial fight.

S1: The Nocturnal Aerie

Encounter Level 2 (625 XP)

Setup

2 shadowhunter bats (B)
2 dire rats (D)
5 giant rats (G)

The characters enter the tall, narrow opening in the mountainside and descend into a wide cavern. Two shadowhunter bats sleep in this cave during the day and hunt at night. The rats never leave the cave and hide in an adjoining chamber to avoid being eaten. They feed off whatever the shadowhunter bats leave behind.

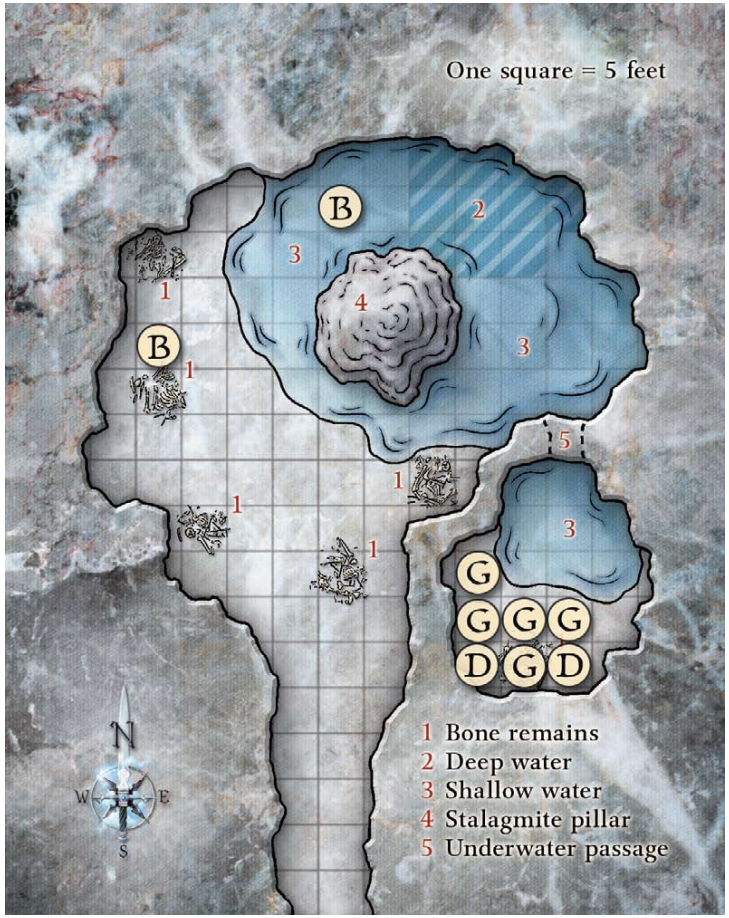
Tactics

The shadowhunter bats are clumsy fighters on the ground and so remain airborne when attacking (dangling from the cave ceiling when at rest). They typically begin and end their flyby attacks behind or near the central stalagmite pillar in the cave to gain cover or superior cover.

At night, the shadowhunter bats hunt outside but are never far away. The rats attack first at night, attracting the bats from outside one round later. During the day, the rats hide in the adjoining chamber connected by an underwater passage. They delay until the shadowhunter bats attack first and then harry the characters on the ground.

Features of the Area

Illumination: None.
Bone Remains: Skeletal remains from hunted creatures are scattered across the floor. They count as difficult terrain.
Water: Moving through water counts as difficult terrain. The deep end of the cave requires a DC 10 Athletics check to swim.
Slight Slope: The cave slopes downward, but not so much as to create difficult terrain in the reverse direction.
Treasure: Three vials of *ghoststrike oil* (see page 28 of the *Adventure's Vault™*) can be found in the adjoining chamber (backpack of gnome skeleton).



2 Shadowhunter Bats **Level 3 Lurker**
Medium shadow beast XP 150 each

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 12
Speed 2 (clumsy), fly 8; see also *flyby attack*

⊕ **Tail Slash** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage. In dim light or darkness, a shadowhunter bat gains a +2 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 6 damage.

↟ **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)
The shadowhunter bat flies up to 8 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The bat doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +10
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3) **Int** 2 (-3) **Cha** 11 (+1)

5 Giant Rats **Level 1 Minion**
Small natural beast XP 25 each

Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 15; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 12
Speed 6, climb 3

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+6 vs. AC; 3 damage.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 12 (+1) **Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 12 (+1) **Int** 2 (-4) **Cha** 6 (-2)

2 Dire Rats **Level 1 Brute**
Medium natural beast XP 100 each

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 38; **Bloodied** 19
AC 15; **Fortitude** 15, **Refl ex** 13, **Will** 11
Immune fi lth fever (see below)
Speed 6, climb 3

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Disease**
+4 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage, and the target contracts fi lth fever (see below).

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +7
Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Wis** 10 (+0)
Con 18 (+4) **Int** 3 (-4) **Cha** 6 (-2)

Filth Fever **Level 3 Disease** **Endurance improve DC 16, maintain DC 11, worsen DC 10 or lower**

The target is cured.

◀ **Initial Effect:** The target loses a healing surge

◀▶ The target takes a - 2 penalty to AC, Fortitude defense, and Reflex defense.

▶ **Final State:** The target takes a - 2 penalty to AC, Fortitude defense, and Reflex defense. The target loses all healing surges and cannot regain hit points.

S2: Restless Guardians

Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

Setup

Vrak Tiburcaex, phantom dragonborn (V)
2 dragonborn specters (S)
1 zombie (Z)
4 decrepit skeletons (D)

The phantom dragonborn named Vrak Tiburcaex manifests through the statue as the characters come within 6 squares of the sculpture. Vrak is open to parleying with the characters but will attack the party if they approach the line of statues without permission.

Tactics

The phantom dragonborn speaks to the characters after phasing out of the ancient dragonborn statue.

"This is no place for the still breathing. It is a sad tomb meant for the dead. My name was Vrak Tiburcaex in life, but now I am something less. My soldiers and I mean to do you no harm, but our preference will become meaningless if you persist here. We are duty-bound to the last remaining scion of a once glorious house of warriors. While it pains us to siphon life from the living, we must carry out the will of our new steward, even if doing so compromises our noble history. Leave while you can or forfeit your lives to our growing hunger. We can only stand idle for so long."

Vrak is a profoundly despondent ghost who clearly does not enjoy her current predicament (Insight DC 12). She has become the instrument of Bejik Vuthaner, a Zehir-worshipping dragonborn, who has proven to her satisfaction that they are related by blood. Vrak is forthcoming about how much she regrets her obligation to Bejik but will not allow the characters to approach the line of statues without a fight. She is loyal to her familial descendant, regardless of his contemptible god. If the characters parley with Vrak, they can start the Ghost of a Chance skill challenge (S3, page 69).

During the skill challenge, two dragonborn specters hover invisibly above the characters while suppressing their *spectral chill* aura. Characters make passive Perception checks to notice the specters, keeping in mind that they have +9 Stealth checks.

Alternatively, a dragonborn character who wears the symbol of Zehir tabard (discovered during The Higher They Fall, page 55) can attempt to pass themselves off as a dragonborn permitted in the valley. As such, they can negotiate permission for themselves and the party to pass through the perimeter without Bejik or the other dragonborn being warned about their presence (Bluff DC 17).

If the characters remain in the area longer than 5 minutes without starting the Ghost of a Chance skill challenge or passing themselves off as dragonborn permitted in the valley, Vrak will attack the closest target while the dragonborn specters reactivate their *spectral chill* aura. Vrak and the specters will attack sooner if the characters move toward the line of statues without permission. They initiate combat with their breath attacks.

The zombie and decrepit skeletons delay until after Vrak and the dragonborn specters use their breath attacks, then emerge out of the ground as a move action already adjacent to the characters. The zombie targets any defender with a *zombie grab*.

After becoming bloodied, Vrak will use her *howling breath* again, shift out of reach, and phase into a hollow space underground to effect her retreat.

"Vrak Tiburcaex," Phantom Dragonborn (V) **Level 4 Soldier**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 175

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 40; **Bloodied** 20
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing

⨁ **Phantom Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+9 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 2 necrotic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the phantom dragonborn's next turn.

⟡ **Howling Breath** (minor; recharge when bloodied) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close blast 3; targets enemies; +7 vs. Will; 2d6 + 2 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the phantom dragonborn's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Insight +7, Stealth +8
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+4)

2 Dragonborn Specters (S) **Level 4 Lurker**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 175 each

Initiative +8 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
Spectral Chill (Cold) aura 1; enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to all defenses.
HP 30; **Bloodied** 15
AC 16; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing

⨁ **Spectral Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+7 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 2 necrotic damage.

⟡ **Spectral Breath** (minor; recharge when bloodied) ✦ **Illusion, Psychic**
Close blast 3; targets enemies; +7 vs. Will; 2d6 + 2 psychic damage, and the target is knocked prone.

Invisibility (standard; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
The specter becomes invisible until it attacks or until it is hit by an attack.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Draconic
Skills Stealth +9
Str 10 (+2)**Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 8 (+1)
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 6 (+1) **Cha** 15 (+4)

Zombie (Z)	**Level 2 Brute**
Medium natural animate (undead)	XP 125
Initiative -1	**Senses** Perception +0; darkvision
HP 40; **Bloodied** 20; see also *zombie weakness*	
AC 13; **Fortitude** 13, **Refl ex** 9, **Will** 10	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Speed 4	
⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)	
+6 vs. AC; 2d6 + 2 damage.	
ǂ **Zombie Grab** (standard; at-will)	
+4 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed (until escape). Checks made to escape the zombie's grab take a -5 penalty.	
Zombie Weakness	
Any critical hit to the zombie reduces it to 0 hit points instantly.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –	
Str 14 (+3)	**Dex** 6 (-1) **Wis** 8 (+0)
Con 10 (+1)	**Int** 1 (-4) **Cha** 3 (-3)

4 Decrepit Skeletons (D)	**Level 1 Minion**
Medium natural animate (undead)	XP 25 each
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception +2; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 13	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+6 vs. AC; 4 damage.	
⊰ **Shortbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Ranged 15/30; +6 vs. AC; 3 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 15 (+2)	**Dex** 17 (+3) **Wis** 14 (+2)
Con 13 (+1)	**Int** 3 (-4) **Cha** 3 (-4)
Equipment heavy shield, longsword, shortbow, quiver of 10 arrows	

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light, or dim light at night.

Brush: Forest scrub grows throughout the valley and counts as difficult terrain.

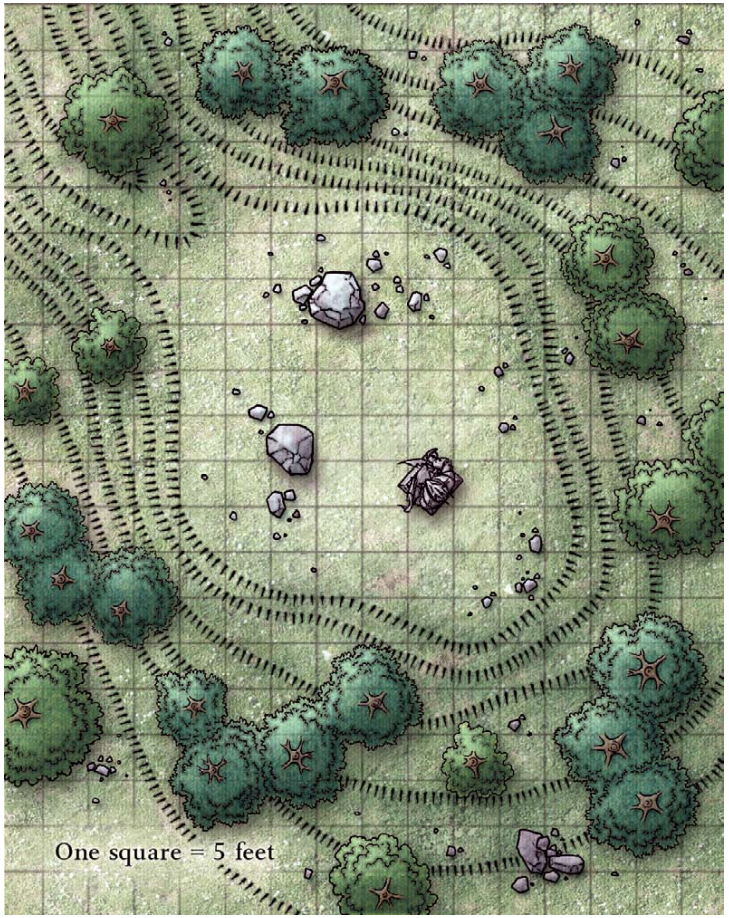
Floating Debris: Pieces of broken marble and stonework hover in mid-air.

Statues: The broken dragonborn statues are spaced 40 feet apart (100 statues around the valley perimeter). It costs 2 squares of movement to maneuver around a statue.

Steep Slope: Moving uphill in this area counts as difficult terrain.

Rubble: Marble architecture protrudes out of the ground and can provide normal cover if crouched behind and superior cover if prone. Rubble counts as difficult terrain.

Trees: Fir trees provide cover and can be climbed (Athletics DC 15).



S3: Ghost of a Chance

Encounter Level 5 (800 XP)

Setup

Vrak has no love for Bejik Vuthaner. She despises his worship of Zehir, and this can be used to persuade her to either turn against her descendant or to at least withdraw her support. Vrak can agree with every argument the party makes and still attack the characters, compelled by honor until her familial connection to Bejik is disproved.

In this skill challenge, the characters attempt to convince Vrak Tiburcaex that her loyalties to Bejik Vuthaner are misplaced.

Ghost of a Chance **Level 5**
Skill Challenge XP 600

Vrak Tiburcaex, the lingering spirit of a noble dragonborn warrior, questions her loyalty to a living descendant.

Complexity
4 (requires 10 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills
Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Intimidate, Insight

Success
Vrak admits that Bejik proved his connection to her family with a patent of nobility. Vrak will not let the characters pass the line of statues without a fight, but if they succeed, she will not inform Bejik that they have entered the valley. If the characters disprove the family connection by presenting Vrak with the forged and actual patents of nobility, she immediately sides with the characters against Bejik.

Failure
Vrak is resigned to serving Bejik as her only living descendant. Not only will Vrak fight to prevent the characters from passing the statue line, but if they succeed, she retreats to inform Bejik that they have entered the valley. If the characters present Vrak with the authentic patent of nobility afterward, she no longer knows who to trust, flies into the ceiling, phases out a vital piece of masonry holding the ceiling in place, and starts an avalanche that will bury the ruined citadel and anybody left inside.

Bluff
Standard action. The first use of this skill fails automatically and reveals to the characters that Vrak cannot be bluffed.
Vrak has no patience for conjecture, half-truths, or lies. She sees through deceptions instantly.

Diplomacy
DC 10, standard action. A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge but only after a successful Insight check; before that, it reveals that the character's need to make an Insight check before they can use Diplomacy.
You appeal to Vrak's honorable nature in the hope that she will give your words a fair audience and due consideration.

History
DC 15, standard action. A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge.
You speak with authority about dragonborn lineage or how the Tiburcaex family would never sully its good name by associating with Zehir worshipers.

Insight
DC 10, minor action. A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge and allows use of Diplomacy and Intimidate skills in subsequent checks. It also reveals that any use of Bluff will fail automatically.
You sense that Vrak is an honorable and straightforward soul who dislikes being a ghost and likes the underhanded ways of Bejik even less.

Intimidate
DC 15, standard action. A successful check counts as a success on the skill challenge but only after a successful Insight check; before that, it reveals that the character's need to make an Insight check before they can use Intimidate. A dragonborn character gains a +2 bonus on this check.
You shame Vrak for ever trusting somebody who worships the evil god Zehir.

S4: The Floating Tower

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

Setup

2 dragonborn brigands (B)
2 dragonborn snipers (S)
1 warwing drake (D)

A dragonborn brigand patrols the area beneath the floating tower near the bottom of the valley. A dragonborn sniper remains hidden on a Medium piece of floating debris 15 squares off the ground (half-way along the path from the rubble mound to the floating tower), looking out for the dragonborn brigand on the ground. A second dragonborn brigand and warwing drake survey the valley from atop the floating tower. A second dragonborn sniper surveys the valley from the bottom floor of the floating tower.

If the characters succeeded at the Ghost of a Chance skill challenge (S3, page 69), they may surprise the dragonborn brigands and dragonborn snipers.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light or dim light at night.

Clearing: The area directly beneath the floating tower has been cleared of debris and leveled.

Floating Debris: Pieces of broken marble and stonework hover in mid air. Characters can position themselves behind or under floating debris and gain cover or superior cover. For the same reason, the warwing drake and dragonborn rider benefit from normal cover when flying.

Rubble: Broken marble is strewn over the battlefield, creating difficult terrain. Large chunks of marble architecture litter the ground and provide cover if standing and superior cover if crouching behind. It costs 3 squares of movement to climb onto Large pieces of rubble.

Rubble Mound: The bottom of the valley is one enormous, overgrown mound of rubble comprised of debris from Ustraternes. It requires a DC 10 Athletics check to climb the mound up to 50 feet. The entire mound is comprised of Large marble chunks that provide cover if standing and superior cover if crouching behind.

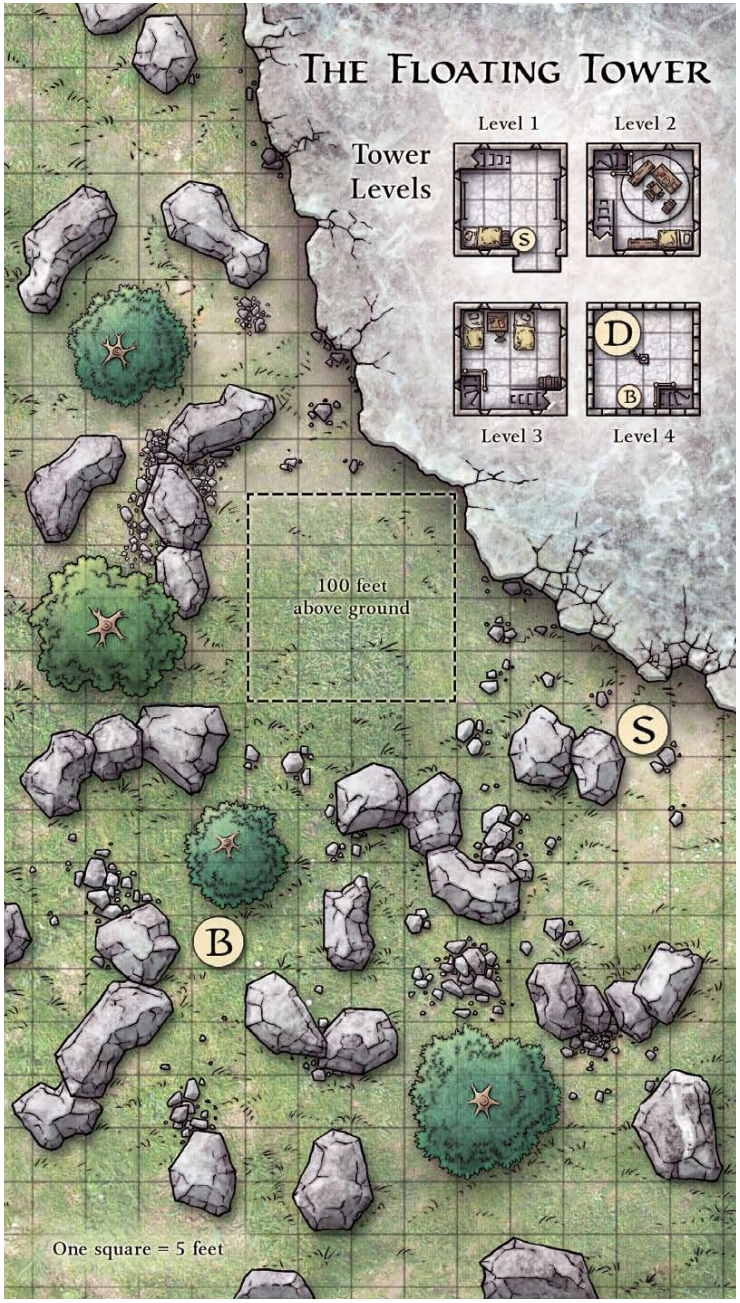
Trees: Fir trees provide cover and can be climbed (Athletics DC 15).

Tactics

If the characters failed the Ghost of a Chance skill challenge and Vrak Tiburcaex retreated, then the dragonborn in this encounter have been warned about their presence. In this case, a dragonborn brigand openly approaches the party (without his Zehir tabard) and makes a Bluff attempt.

"Hail to you all! I heard fighting in the valley and feared that the undead had increased their numbers. I barely survived myself. They've boxed me into this forsaken place without food or water. Perhaps you can spare a little of both?" The dragonborn points to the floating tower. "In return, I'll gladly share my temporary refuge."

If the characters see through this Bluff attempt, they are not surprised by the dragonborn when the attack comes.



The patrolling dragonborn brigand on the ground benefits from the Perception skill of the dragonborn sniper positioned on a Medium piece of floating debris. The dragonborn brigand, warwing drake, and dragonborn sniper positioned in the tower are well hidden and more than 10 squares away (Perception DC 27). As such, they benefit from superior concealment and superior cover once revealed.

If the characters fail to see through the Bluff attempt, then the dragonborn brigand on the ground claims to be an airborne courier named Gix who delivers messages between cities. He explains that his mount began flying unpredictably over the summit and threw him from the saddle. To his knowledge, the only place the undead do not go is the floating tower. He adds that if they choose to follow him, he will gladly show them how to reach the tower safely, but he will not wait for the undead to return.

Once the characters are within close range of the dragonborn snipers, the dragonborn brigand yells "Attack!" and triggers the readied attacks of his allies.

The patrolling dragonborn brigand will charge, while the dragonborn sniper in the tower uses *disruptive shot* from cover to grant him combat advantage. The second dragonborn sniper will likewise attack with *distruptive shot*, then move to different pieces of floating debris in search of cover, eventually retreating all the way to the floating tower. The dragonborn brigand atop the floating tower mounts the warwing drake and swoops down against the characters using the creature's flyby attack and his own flail attack.

If the dragonborn were warned about the characters, then their weapons are already coated with bloodstinger poison. They must otherwise use a standard action to coat their weapons with bloodstinger poison.

2 Dragonborn Snipers (S) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175 each

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22; see also *dragonborn fury*
AC 18; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15
Speed 6

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC (+9 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 damage.

⊕ **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 20/40; +10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d10 + 4 damage. *Bloodstinger Poison:* If this is the weapon's first hit; +6 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Disruptive Shot (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longbow; range 20/40; +8 vs. AC (+9 while bloodied); 1d10+ 4 damage, and the dragonborn sniper grants allies adjacent to target combat advantage until the end of their next turn.

Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.

Versatile Breath (minor; encounter) ✦ **Poison**
Area burst 2 within 10 squares or close blast 3; +8 vs. Reflex (+9 while bloodied); 1d6 + 4 poison damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills History +5, Intimidate +4, Stealth +10
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Equipment hide armor, longsword, longbow with 30 arrows, bloodstinger poison, Zehir tabard

2 Dragonborn Brigands (B) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175 each

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +3
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also *dragonborn fury*
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15
Speed 5

⊕ **Heavy Flail** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC (+8 while bloodied); 2d6 + 4 damage. *Bloodstinger Poison:* If this is the weapon's first hit; +6 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.

Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3; +6 vs. Reflex (+7 while bloodied); 1d6 + 4 poison damage.

Erratic Maneuver (move; encounter)
Make a Bluff check to gain combat advantage.

Vicious Strike ✦ **Weapon**
Requires flail and combat advantage; the dragonborn brigand deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee attacks.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Bluff +9, History +4, Intimidate +6, Stealth +8
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+4)
Equipment chain armor, heavy flail, bloodstinger poison, Zehir tabard

Warwing Drake (D) **Level 4 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount, reptile) XP 175

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Immune fear (while flying)
Speed 8, fly 8, overland flight 12; see also *flyby attack*

m **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

M **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage

M **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)
The warwing drake flies up to 8 squares and makes two claw attacks at any point during that movement. The drake doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from a target of either attack.

Fearless Flight (while flying and mounted by a friendly rider of 4th level or higher; no action) **Mount**
Attackers can't target the warwing drake's rider when the drake's movement provokes opportunity attacks.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Athletics +11
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Features of the Floating Tower

Illumination: Bright light or dim light at night.

Arcane Symbols: A circle of magical runes has been etched around a bookshelf, chair, desk, and *arcane locked* chest. An identify ritual check on the runes identifies the *magic circle* ritual and shadow category (Arcana DC 22). The original Arcana check for this magic circle is 20.

Armory: An armor form or weapon rack provides cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to maneuver around an armor form or weapon rack. The weapon rack is stocked with pickaxes and shovels.

Bed: The bed provides cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop onto the bed. A character can make a DC 15 Strength check to tip over the bed, which can then grant superior cover.

Battlements: A crenellated parapet borders the top of the tower and provides superior cover.

Bookshelves: The shelf in the *magic circle* and the one against the wall contain tomes about the nature of magic. By skimming these books, a character can identify two rituals hidden in the text (Arcana DC 15 to recognize each). Reading these tomes automatically identifies the rituals contained therein (see Treasure below).

Chairs: A chair can be picked up and wielded as an improved weapon, but it is smashed if the modified attack roll is 17 or higher.

Desks: A Small creature can move under a desk or table and gain cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to hop onto a desk. A character can make a DC 10 Strength check to tip over a desk, which can then grant superior cover.

Locked Chest: It costs 2 squares of movement to maneuver around the chest. The chest can be opened with a DC 25 Thievery or Strength check. An identify ritual check on the chest identifies the *arcane lock* ritual (Arcana DC 22).

Mooring: A strong chain is fixed to the top (open) floor of the tower. The chain is meant to bind a warwing drake by its collar.

Strongbox: A strongbox beside each bed contains rations and personal items.

Walls: These 1-foot-thick walls are made from ancient, quarried stone. They can be climbed (Athletics DC 15) but not broken.

Window: Open windows provide superior cover. Climbing through an open window costs 2 squares of movement.

Treasure: The arcane tomes contain the rituals *secret chest* and *sending* (see page 199 of *Adventurer's Vault*). Four of the strongboxes contain a sturdy antique dagger (250 gp) and a tonic of antivenom.

Development

Dragonborn kept alive are hostile targets for any Intimidate skill checks. If successfully cowed, they reveal the entrance to the ruins, wherein their commander, Bejik Vuthaner, has been utilizing an ancient ritual to subjugate warwing drakes. The dragonborn can also reveal that Bejik negotiated a truce with the undead of this valley.

Searching the tower bookshelf yields multiple tomes about the nature of magic, two of which contain a single ritual each.

Searching the tower desk, the characters find colored inks, fancy quills, expensive paper, and a patent of nobility written in Draconic. The patent of nobility starts with the name Vrak Tiburcaex (Child Born of the Sword), details scores of generations, and ends with the name Bejik Vuthaner (Savior of the Black Spear).

Treasure: Searching the arcane locked chest, the characters find four *potions of healing*, a piece of white *eternal chalk*, several books about dragonborn ancestry written in Draconic, and a second, older patent of nobility. Both patents trace the same lineage, but this one does not include the Vuthaner family name. Vrak Tiburcaex is mentioned several times in the lineage books as a warrior who served in Ustraternes; the Vuthaner name does not appear in the books. If the two patents are compared, a History skill check (DC 15) reveals that this one is genuine and the one in the desk is a forgery.

S5: The Ruined Citadel

Encounter Level 6 (1,350 XP)

Setup

Bejik Vuthaner, dragonborn venom zealot (B)
1 dragonborn brigand (R)
1 dragonborn sniper (S)
1 warwing drake (D)
Vrak Tiburcaex, phantom dragonborn (V)
1 pseudodragon (P)

Bejik Vuthaner and his servants occupy the excavated section of the citadel that has been preserved underground for a millennia. If the characters have infiltrated the ruined citadel without Vrak or a dragonborn servant alerting Bejik of their presence and have either circumvented or disabled the poison mist trap, they can possibly surprise the dragonborn venom zealot and his servants moments after they complete the *mindshape warwing drake* ritual (see page 77) in the far north tower.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Bright light or darkness.

Arcane Symbols: The warwing drake in the far north tower is surrounded by a circle of magical runes etched into the ground. An identify ritual check on the runes identifies the *magic circle* ritual and natural category (Arcana DC 22).

Ceiling: The ceilings in the north and south towers are 15 feet high. The ceilings on the second floors of these towers are 10 feet high.

Doors: The two doors leading into the north tower are made from wood and can be broken (DC 16).

Rubble: Heavy rubble is impassible and chokes doorways, passages, and rooms. Light rubble appears in certain places across the floor and counts as difficult terrain.

Second Floors: The second floor of the north and south towers can be accessed but are largely choked with rubble. The windows can be accessed at this level, but only the center window has line of sight to the courtyard below.

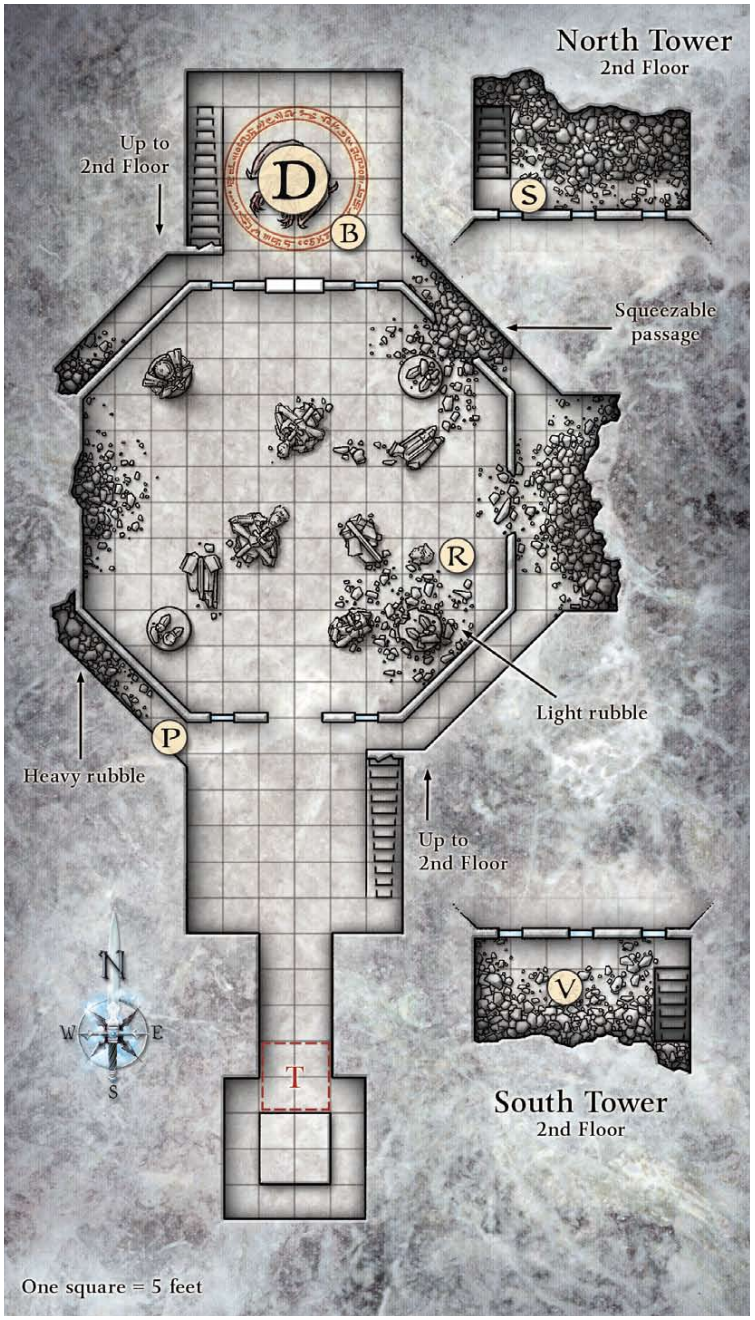
Statues and Pedestals: The broken pieces of statues and their original pedestals provide cover. The intact northwest statue and pedastal provides superior cover. It costs 2 squares of movement to climb over a piece of statue or pedestal or maneuver around the intact statue.

Walls: These 1-foot walls are made from ancient quarried stone. They can be climbed (Athletics DC 20) but not broken.

Window: Open windows provide superior cover. Climbing through an open window costs 2 squares of movement.

Treasure: Bejik Vuthaner wields a black *poisoned greatspear +1* (page 75 of *Adventure's Vault*), wears a pair of *wildrunner boots* (page 131 of *Adventure's Vault*), and carries a *potion of healing*.

The dragonborn brigand wears an *amulet of health +1*, and the dragonborn sniper wears a suit of *adder-grease leather armor +1* (page 39 of *Adventure's Vault*).



Tactics

If Vrak or a dragonborn servant was able to warn Bejik, or the characters set off the poison mist trap, he speaks out loud as they enter the ruined citadel, now prepared for their attack with an ambush of his own.

"Welcome lost children. You chose the perfect time to visit my domain. Spirits of this ruin lend their ghostly might to my cause. Of course, you can no more see them than you can me. Indeed, my servants have already surrounded your position. But don't fret. The darkness of Zehir will fall upon you soon enough."

Combat begins when Bejik uses *smothering cloak of Zehir* to extinguish all sources of illumination in the ruined citadel while granting darkvision to any allies within his aura using *piercing eyes of Zehir*. All his servants have delayed, waiting for this moment to strike with combat advantage and concealment. They act after the highest possible initiative that Bejik can roll (24), having delayed if necessary for this place in the combat.

The dragonborn venom zealot maintains complete cover in the far tower with a newly created warwing drake, as per the *mindshape warwing drake* ritual (page 77). Bejik watches the characters through the space between the wooden doors of the far north tower as they emerge from the 30-foot tunnel into the gutted south tower.

The dragonborn sniper is hidden on the second floor of the north tower with superior concealment and superior cover once revealed (Perception DC 25). The dragonborn brigand attempts to sneak up on the characters using the broken statues for cover and the darkness to gain superior concealment. The dragonborn brigand and dragonborn sniper have coated their weapons with bloodstinger poison.

The phantom dragonborn (Vrak Tiburcaex) is hiding on the second floor of the south tower in a pocket of rubble. The pseudodragon is invisible, waiting to strike at the characters with surprise. Make a Stealth check for it (+10) to determine whether characters notice it with passive Perception (or an active Perception check if they actively search).

The dragonborn brigand will harry a party defender on the ground while Vrak targets a party striker. The pseudodragon makes flyby attacks against a party controller and the dragonborn sniper uses disruptive shot from a distance to grant the dragonborn brigand combat advantage. The warwing drake remains within the magic circle of the north tower until Bejik releases the creature.

Bejik will approach to within range of his *enlarged dragon breath* and exhale poison on the characters, making no effort to exclude Vrak (who is immune to poison) or the dragonborn brigand (wearing an *amulet of health*). Bejik will then join the melee with his great-spear and help as needed, targeting a party striker.

If the characters succeeded at the skill challenge S3: Ghost of a Chance and use a move action to present Vrak with the authentic patent of nobility, she spends a standard action examining the document, then immediately switches sides. Present the statistics for Vrak Tiburcaex to the party to use in this combat as they deem fit, keeping in mind that she is now furious with Bejik.

Bejik Vuthaner, Level 5 Elite Controller (Leader)
Dragonborn Venom Zealot
Medium natural humanoid XP 500

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +3, darkvision
Piercing Eyes of Zehir aura sight; allies in aura gain darkvision
HP 126; **Bloodied** 63; see also *dragonborn fury*
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 20
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5
Action Points 1

⊕ **Spear of the Forked Tongue** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires greatspear; reach 2; +11 vs. AC (+12 while bloodied); 1d10 + 4 damage (crit 1d6 + 14 damage), and the dragonborn venom zealot makes a *viper's bite* attack against an adjacent target.

⊕ **Viper's Bite** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Poison**
+8 vs. AC (+9 while bloodied); 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.

Enlarged Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3/5; +8 vs. Reflex (+9 while bloodied); 1d6 + 3 poison damage.

Hidden Fangs (immediate reaction, when an ally hits with a melee attack; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Poison**
Range 5; one ally within range gains a secondary attack equal to primary attack -2 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage.

Smothering Cloak of Zehir (minor; recharge ⚅)
Range sight; all forms of illumination are extinguished until the end of encounter. New sources of illumination may be ignited after this ability is activated.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Arcana +10, History +12, Intimidate +13
Str 17 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 16 (+5) **Cha** 19 (+6)
Equipment scale armor, *+1 poisoned greatspear*, *wildrunner boots*, *potion of healing*, ritual book

If the characters failed at the Ghost of a Chance skill challenge but now use a move action to present Vrak with the authentic patent of nobility, she spends a standard action examining the document, then immediately experiences a crisis of loyalty. Vrak flies away, phases into the ceiling, and removes a vital piece of masonry that holds up the overhead rubble. This activates the Collapsing Ceiling hazard.

If Bejik notices the patent of nobility before the characters present it to Vrak, he will try to seize or destroy it. If the psuedodragon is still alive, Bejik commands the creature to snatch the patent of nobility from the characters. Grabbing it is a Dex vs. Reflex attack. While it is stuffed in a character's pocket or bag, the patent's Reflex defense equals the character's AC. If a character is holding it, the patent has the character's Reflex defense.

Once Bejik has lost two of his dragonborn servants, he falls back to the north tower, releases the warwing drake from the magic circle, and climbs onto the creature's back. Bejik then emerges from the north tower through the double doors and rides across the courtyard toward the south tower, into the 30-foot passageway, and up the roughly hewn shaft. The warwing drake will make fly-by attacks against the characters to avoid opportunity attacks, allowing the mounted Bejik to enjoy the same protection. The warwing drake will resist being ridden by anybody except Bejik, who attacks with his greatspear while mounted.

Special: This encounter is when the warwing drake from V2: Taming the Docile Beast may return at either an opportune or inopportune time, depending on whether the characters succeeded or failed at that skill challenge. If the characters succeeded at the skill challenge and need help during this battle, the drake swoops into the chamber and attacks the dragonborn (or prevents Bejik from escaping). If they are winning this battle but failed at the skill challenge, the drake swoops into the ruined chamber and either attacks the characters or otherwise aids the dragonborn.

Collapsing Ceiling **Level 2 Lurker**
Hazard XP 125

A foreboding crack echoes through the chamber that quickly grows to a thunderous rumble.

Hazard: The mound of rubble above the chamber collapses, filling the Ruined Citadel area with tumbling, crushing slabs of masonry and debris.

Perception
DC 5: The character realizes that the ceiling is collapsing before the first chunks hit the floor and gains a +2 Reflex bonus until the start of the character's next turn.
DC 15: As a free action, the character can shout directions to an ally within 5 and give that ally a +2 Reflex bonus until the start of this character's next turn.

Trigger
The hazard is triggered when Vrak Tiburcaex loosens the stones holding the ceiling together. At that time, allow the characters to make Perception checks, then roll the hazard's initiative and place it in the turn order.

Initiative +5

Attack
Standard Action
Close burst 8 (fills entire area between North and South Towers)
Targets: Creatures in burst
Attack: +4 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6+2 damage
Miss: Half damage
The burst area becomes difficult terrain at the moment initiative is rolled for the hazard. The collapse continues for 5 rounds. At the end of 5 rounds, the burst area becomes impassable.

Countermeasures
As a minor action, a character in the burst area can make a DC 10 Acrobatics or Athletics check to dodge nimbly between falling rubble. With a successful check, a character takes half damage (no damage on a miss) from rubble until the start of the character's next turn.

Dragonborn Sniper (S) **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22; see also *dragonborn fury*
AC 18; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15
Speed 6

Longsword (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+8 vs. AC (+9 while bloodied); 1d8 + 3 damage.

Longbow (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Range 20/40; +10 vs. AC (+11 while bloodied); 1d10 + 4 damage. *Bloodstinger Poison:* If this is the weapon's first hit; +6 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Disruptive Shot (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
Requires longbow; range 20/40; +8 vs. AC (+9 while bloodied); 1d10 + 4 damage, and the dragonborn sniper grants allies adjacent to target combat advantage until the end of their next turn.

Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.

Versatile Breath (minor; encounter) ✦ **Poison**
Area burst 2 within 10 squares or close blast 3; +8 vs. Reflex (+9 while bloodied); 1d6 + 4 poison damage.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills History +5, Intimidate +4, Stealth +10
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 14 (+4) **Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Equipment hide armor, longsword, longbow with 30 arrows, bloodstinger poison, Zehir tabard

Development

If Vrak caused the ceiling of the ruined citadel to collapse, Bejik and his servants become invested in saving their own necks. They will use every chance to slow down the player characters and escape first. If both sides manage to escape and Bejik remains alive, the battle spills above ground.

"Vrak Tiburcaex," Phantom Dragonborn **Level 4 Soldier (V)**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead) XP 175

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +7; darkvision
HP 40; **Bloodied** 20
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing

⊕ **Phantom Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**
+9 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 2 necrotic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the phantom dragonborn's next turn.

Howling Breath (minor; recharge when bloodied) ✦ **Fear, Psychic**
Close blast 3; targets enemies; +7 vs. Will; 2d6 + 2 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the phantom dragonborn's next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Insight +7, Stealth +8
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+4)

Pseudodragon **Level 3 Lurker**
Small natural beast (reptile) XP 150

Initiative +9 **Senses** Perception +8
HP 40; **Bloodied** 20
AC 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Refl ex** 15, **Will** 14
Speed 4, fl y 8 (hover); see also *flyby attack*

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.

⊕ **Sting** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Poison**
+8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Flyby Attack (standard; at-will)
The pseudodragon flies up to 8 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The pseudodragon doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.

Invisibility (standard; recharges when the pseudodragon is damaged) ✦ **Illusion**
As long as the pseudodragon doesn't move, it is invisible.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Insight +8, Stealth +10
Str 13 (+2) **Dex** 18 (+5) **Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 16 (+4) **Int** 6 (-1) **Cha** 17 (+4)

Dragonborn Brigand (R) **Level 4 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +3
HP 66; **Bloodied** 33; see also dragonborn fury
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 15
Speed 5

⊕ **Heavy Flail** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+7 vs. AC (+8 while bloodied); 2d6 + 4 damage.
Bloodstinger Poison: If this is the weapon's first hit; +6 vs. Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Dragonborn Fury (only while bloodied)
A dragonborn gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls.

Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3; +6 vs. Reflex (+7 while bloodied); 1d6 + 4 poison damage.

Erratic Maneuver (move; encounter)
Make a Bluff check to gain combat advantage.

Vicious Strike ✦ **Weapon**
Requires flail and combat advantage; the dragonborn brigand deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee attacks.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic
Skills Bluff +9, History +4, Intimidate +6, Stealth +8
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+4)
Equipment chain armor, heavy flail, bloodstinger poison, Zehir tabard

Warwing Drake (D) **Level 4 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount, reptile) XP 175

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16
Immune fear (while flying)
Speed 8, fly 8, overland flight 12; see also *flyby attack*

m **Bite** (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.

M **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage

M **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)
The warwing drake flies up to 8 squares and makes two claw attacks at any point during that movement. The drake doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from a target of either attack.

Fearless Flight (while flying and mounted by a friendly rider of 4th level or higher; no action) **Mount**
Attackers can't target the warwing drake's rider when the drake's movement provokes opportunity attacks.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Athletics +11
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+2)

Appendix 1

Warwing Drake

A lethal reptile in the air, warwing drakes can hit multiple targets before flying away. They balance mass and strength with intellect and mobility, creating an even-tempered flying mount. Most warwing drakes cannot speak, but they understand spoken Draconic.

Warwing Drake	**Level 4 Skirmisher**
Large natural beast (mount, reptile)	XP 175
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +10	
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 16	
Immune fear (while flying)	
Speed 8, fly 8, overland flight 12; see also *flyby attack*	
m **Bite** (standard; at-will)	
+9 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.	
M **Claw** (standard; at-will)	
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage	
M **Flyby Attack** (standard; at-will)	
The warwing drake flies up to 8 squares and makes two claw attacks at any point during that movement. The drake doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from a target of either attack.	
Fearless Flight (while flying and mounted by a friendly rider of 4th level or higher; no action) **Mount**	
Attackers can't target the warwing drake's rider when the drake's movement provokes opportunity attacks.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –	
Skills Athletics +11	
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 16 (+5)	
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+2)	

Warwing Drake Tactics

A warwing drake is most effective when airborne and so relies heavily on flyby attacks to target multiple opponents. Keenly aware and self-preserving, the drake attacks opponents armed with ranged spells or weapons and flees once bloodied (unless under the control of a rider).

Warwing Drake Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Nature skill check.

DC 15: *Warwing drakes are not only renowned for their strength, but for having the same mental awareness as psuedodragons. They are well-suited to serving as aerial mounts.*

DC 20: *Warwing drakes can understand spoken Draconic.*

A character knows the following information with a successful History skill check.

DC 20: *Warwing drakes were originally bred by dragonborn to serve as flying mounts. They turned wild after the Dragonborn Empire collapsed and were thought to be extinct.*

Appendix 2

Mindshape Warwing Drake

Like the dragonborn beastmasters of old, you instantly tame a warwing drake with a violent burst of psychic energy.

Level: 5
Category: Creation (see text)
Time: 1 Hour
Duration: Permanent
Component Cost: 100 gp
Market Price: 250 gp
Key Skill: Arcana or Nature

To perform this ritual, you require a single warwing drake bound inside a magic circle drawn to bind a natural creature. When you successfully perform this ritual, the warwing drake is tamed as determined by your Arcana or Nature check result.

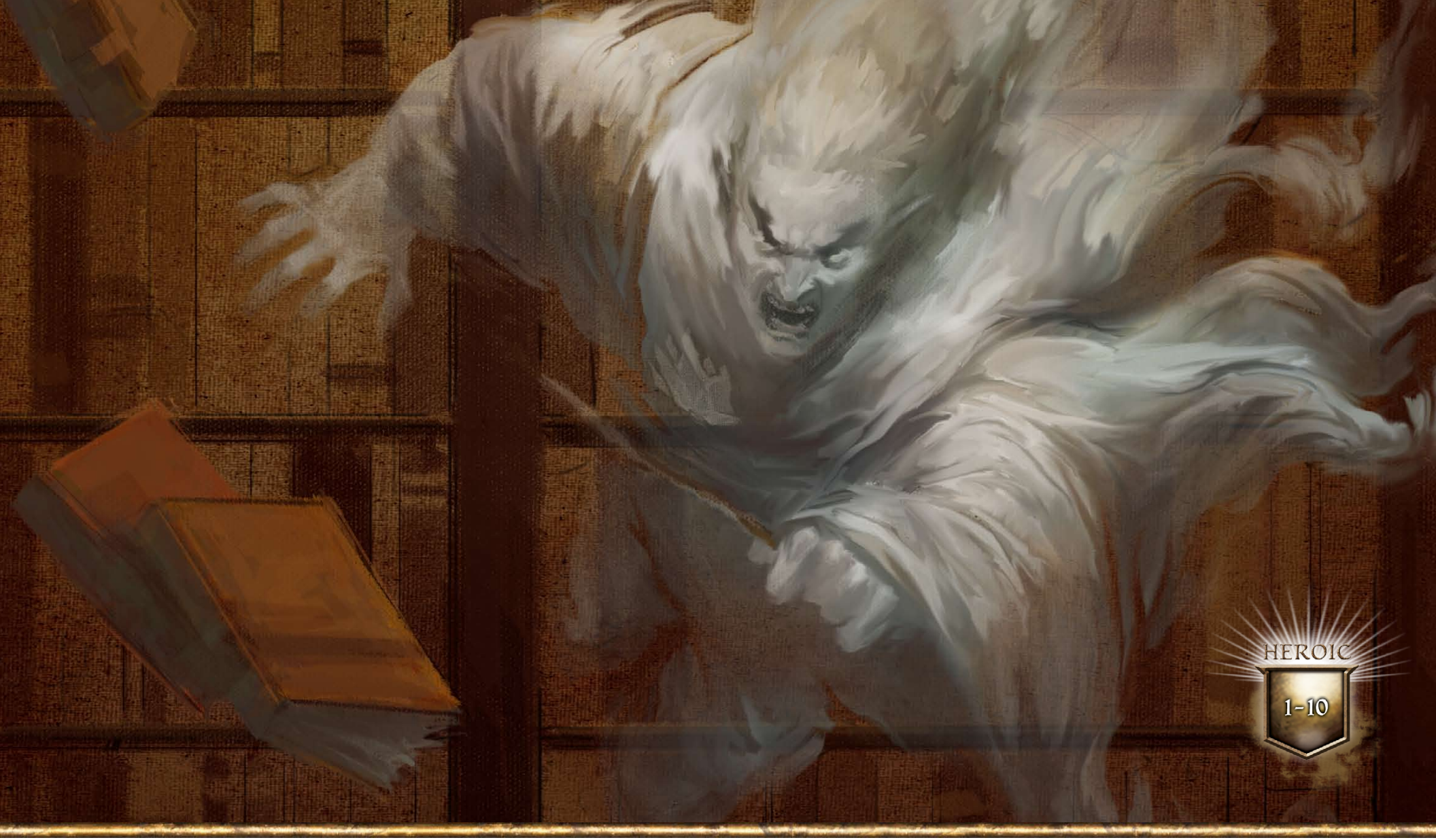
Check Result	Effect on Warwing Drake
7 or lower	-4 Int; attacks all other creatures.
8-13	-2 Int; still wild.
14-19	-1 Int; tame and trained.
20-25	Tame and trained.
26 or higher	Tame and trained; can speak

A tame and trained warwing drake is ready to accept a rider and riding gear, and it understands commands. It is loyal to the ritual caster or someone the ritual caster designates. Such a drake can be trained to accept other potential riders and masters. If the ritual grants the drake the ability to speak, the drake speaks in a broken form of a language the ritual caster selects.

If use of this ritual reduces a warwing drake to 0 Intelligence, the drake dies.

About the Author

Kolja Raven Liquette divides his professional time between writing for books, D&D, and film. His recent credits include *Races of the Dragon* and *Adventurer's Vault*. While Kolja has been known to perform on occasion, this happens more by accident rather than design.



Danger at the White Lotus Academy

By Peter Schaefer
An adventure for 7th-level characters

A school that teaches all things arcane is never quiet. But when the school's students begin to disappear and the headmaster seems unwilling to investigate, someone must look into the matter.

illustrations by C.R. MacTernan
cartography by Sean Macdonald

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Background

The White Lotus Academy has stood for centuries as a repository of arcane learning. It has weighty traditions and holds itself apart from politics, and members of the faculty do not ask for outside help with their problems for reasons of privacy, pride, and public relations.

All is not as it seems within the academy, however. For several years, a spell weaver has concealed itself within the academy grounds. Spell weavers, who are part of a race of entities about which little is known, excel at arcane magic and covet it. This particular spell weaver plans to continue the masquerade for several more years while it acquires control over more and more of the school's faculty and magic.

Adventure Synopsis

When the PCs come to the academy, the spell weaver is in the middle of an invisible conflict with the school's headmaster and endeavors to eliminate the PCs quickly. In its disguise as Instructor Tevors, it triggers several preset traps, such as maliciously enchanted practice mannequins, the dangers of the Lost Secrets Library, and finally an ambush by plant monsters in Stelson Arboretum. In the latter area, the PCs discover the spell weaver trying to complete its domination over the headmaster, and they can choose to fight it directly.

Adventure Hooks

Use one or more of the following adventure hooks to bring the PCs into the adventure.

Invitation to Lecture: Headmaster Marovic invites one of the party's arcane characters to be a guest lecturer at the White Lotus Academy. The invitation includes an honorarium and, if necessary, the magical resources to bring the party to the academy.

Family Obligations: A character's relative asks the character to escort a child safely to the academy, where he or she is to begin initiation into the arcane arts.

Brought by Need: The PCs need to use the academy's considerable resources in the pursuit of another goal—probably to learn an obscure arcane fact. Only Headmaster Marovic has the authority to grant them what they need.

Starting the Adventure

Once the PCs have a reason for visiting White Lotus Academy, you can read aloud or paraphrase the following.

You reach the bronze, east-facing Sunrise Gate of the White Lotus Academy at mid-morning after a brief stroll through the streets of Whitton. When you reach the guard house, a short man with receding brown hair and a ready smile walks up the path to greet you. "Welcome to the White Lotus Academy," he says, "I am Instructor Tevors. Once you're settled, I'll give you a tour of the campus and introduce you to the headmaster."

Instructor Tevors is a teacher of sorcery at the White Lotus Academy and aide to Headmaster Kovaric. He sees to the PCs' immediate needs and shows them rooms in Umberlin Dormitory that they can use while on campus. Once he has accomplished this part of his agenda, he shows them around the White Lotus Academy.

Instructor Tevors seems practiced at showing visitors the comfortable dorms; he points out the many-windowed library; the stained-glass conservatory; the squat, impregnable-seeming laboratory and classroom building; the varied vegetation of the arboretum; and the arcane-shape of the academy's original building. After describing a large circle on the inside of the school's multi-colored wall, Tevors stops outside the wrought-iron gate of a large house.

Read the following aloud:

"The Headmaster's Residence," he states as he looks at the building. He leads you inside.

The interior's wood paneling has an old, worn look that bespeaks age. Tevors leads you up a broad stairway to a landing and through the door at the top into a study that feels cramped due to the numerous bookshelves. In the center of the study, an aged man with gray hair sits with his head on his desk, snoring softly.

Your guide gives you a small smile that wavers after a couple seconds, then he clears his throat. A few moments later, he steps forward and shakes the headmaster, who sits up with a start and looks at Tevors, then you, with bloodshot eyes and sticky drool on his cheek. Before Tevors can speak, the headmaster sways to his feet and yells, "Tevors!" leaning forward as though to counter the force of his voice. "Leave me! My work is urgent and my time is valuable. Begone, and take these petitioners with you!"

With a small shrug and a warning glance at you, Instructor Tevors ushers you out of the office and closes the door behind him. "I'm, uh, well. There's a student duel due to begin any time now. I was hoping you would enjoy the demonstration and perhaps share wisdom from your practical experiences. I have some administrative duties to attend to, but I'll have a student show you the way."

The PCs are led by the wizard-in-training Margo Greenwood to the dueling field at Harrid Yard.

1. Harrid Yard

At Harrid Yard, two combatants square off against each other. Each wears the White Lotus uniform—one in the form of heavy practice armor with a dulled blade, and the other in light practice armor with a wand. Neither is older than 16. The warlock is just getting the upper hand when the practice mannequins go nuts and attack the PCs.

Tactical Encounter: W1. Practice Field (page 56).

When that encounter finishes, Instructor Obrak (a dwarf, see "White Lotus Academy") runs up, saying that a passing student saw the event and fetched him. Instructor Tevors arrives a moment later.

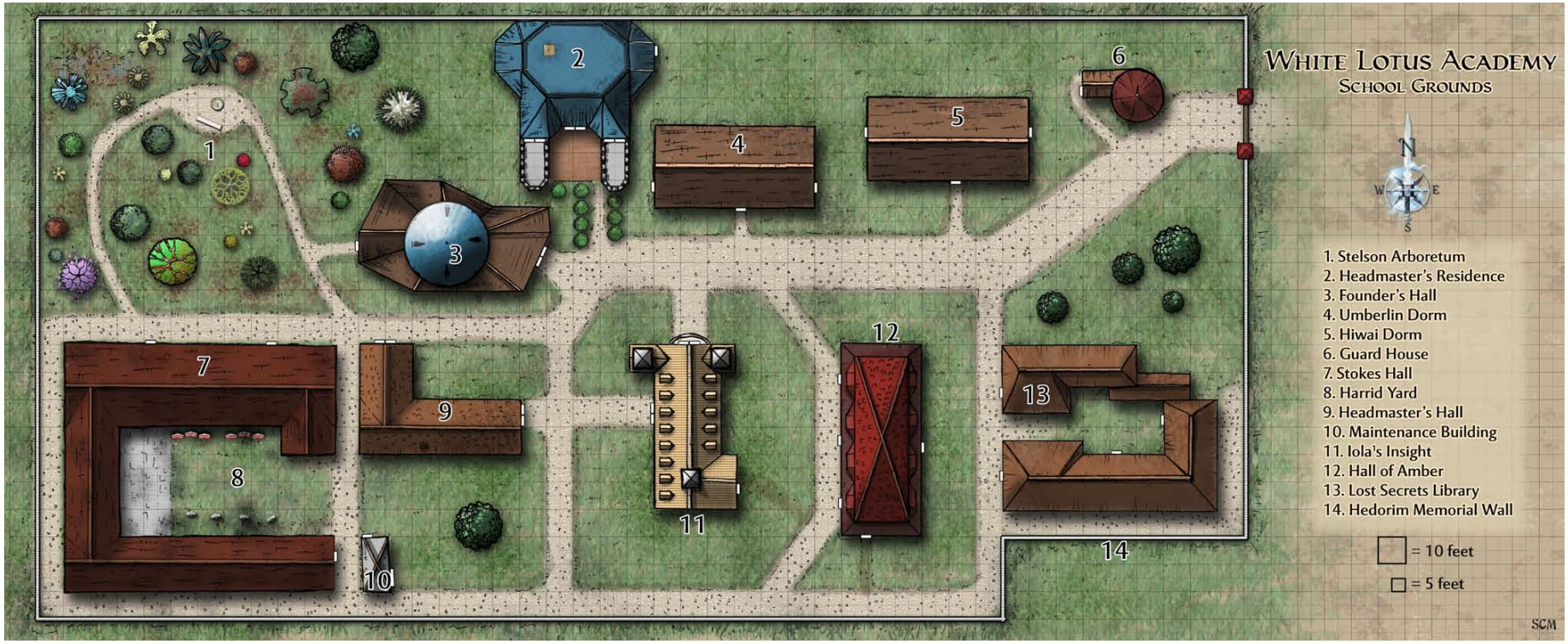
Tevors is nearly breathless after his run to the practice field. "I'm . . . " he gasps, " . . . so incredibly sorry. Nothing like this has ever happened before. The enchantments on those practice dummies have been unchanged for at least 50 years." Then he doubles over and breathes heavily for a minute while the dwarf that ran up just before him talks with the students.

"I'm going to be examining the records of their maintenance and then I'll ask Instructor Westbrooke to examine the mannequins directly." Tevors looks at you. "If you'd like to help me figure out what happened here, you could find me the book in the library that details how they were created originally. I'd send a student, but it's likely to be in one of the more dangerous parts of the stacks."

If the PCs ask to help in another way, Tevors says:

"If I could use your experience and knowledge any other way, I would. But both the maintenance records and the creation instructions are confidential and proprietary, and we can't allow you to see either without permission from the headmaster who . . . who might not be forthcoming, as you saw. This is something you can do now."

Tevors gives the PCs a crystal the size of a finger that, through warmth and chill, will guide them to the correct room in the Lost Secrets Library. If Tevors must to engage their services, he offers them a reward amounting to one treasure parcel for their assistance in clearing up this issue.



2. Lost Secrets Library

The guiding crystal leads you quickly through the first floor, which is a well-lit warren of book-filled nooks and crannies thoroughly seeded with comfortable chairs and desks. Once you reach the back stairwell, the journey becomes more surreal. The crystal guides you down several flights, then leads you out onto a floor that appears identical to the first floor but has no windows or students. It glides up a flight of stairs, into a small corridor that opens into another flight of stairs, and then down another two levels to a door.

When the PCs go through the door, start the encounter.

Tactical Encounter: W2. Library Poltergeists (page 57).

2A. Leaving the Library

After the PCs defeat the poltergeists, they must find the book Tevors needs and leave with it. This requires that they best a skill challenge.

Skill Challenge: SC1. Leaving the Library (page 58).

With the skill challenge complete and successful, the PCs leave the Lost Secrets Library with the book. Instructor Obrak is waiting for them outside the library.

3. Stelson Arboretum

When the PCs near the sundial in Stelson Arboretum, begin the tactical encounter.

Tactical Encounter: W3: Arboretum Ambush (page 60).

After the encounter, any student the PCs encounter tells them to seek Instructor Tevors at Headmaster's Hall.

Read the following aloud when the PCs reach the building.

In the cramped administration building, a narrow hall leads back and around a corner, and a narrow flight of stairs leads up. Directly to the left is a reception desk, and the student sitting there smiles as you approach. "You must be [PC name here] and company," she says. "How can I help you?"

When the PCs ask after Tevors, she says:

"Instructor Tevors is meeting with Headmaster Marovic at the Headmaster's Residence. You could probably meet him there if you want to talk to him."

4. Headmaster's Residence

When the PCs reach the gate to the Headmaster's Residence, they discover that something is wrong.

Tactical Encounter: W4. Spell Weaver (page 62).

Conclusion

After defeating the spell weaver, Headmaster Marovic stands under his own power, if barely. He is more cogent than he was when they first met him, an event Marovic barely remembers, because he was using most of his energy to protect the academy and its students from the spell weaver's hidden efforts to steal their arcane power.

The headmaster is suitably grateful. He honors whatever deal the PCs had with Tevors or the academy for their services and throws in a treasure parcel if the PCs were not promised one by Tevors. They can also receive a tuition-free semester of learning for the relative (if that hook brought them here) or training in the White Lotus Academy's signature feats and spells. The PCs are forevermore regarded as friends of the academy.

W1: Practice Field

Encounter Level 5 (1,200 XP)

Setup

4 practice mannequins (M)
4 White Lotus students

Before they attack, the practice mannequins are inanimate and nonthreatening. They look like little more than suits of armor on frames supported by a rod stuck in the practice field's hard ground. Unless the PCs are particularly suspicious of the practice mannequins, the mannequins have a surprise round when they attack. Place the students at random intervals around the field.

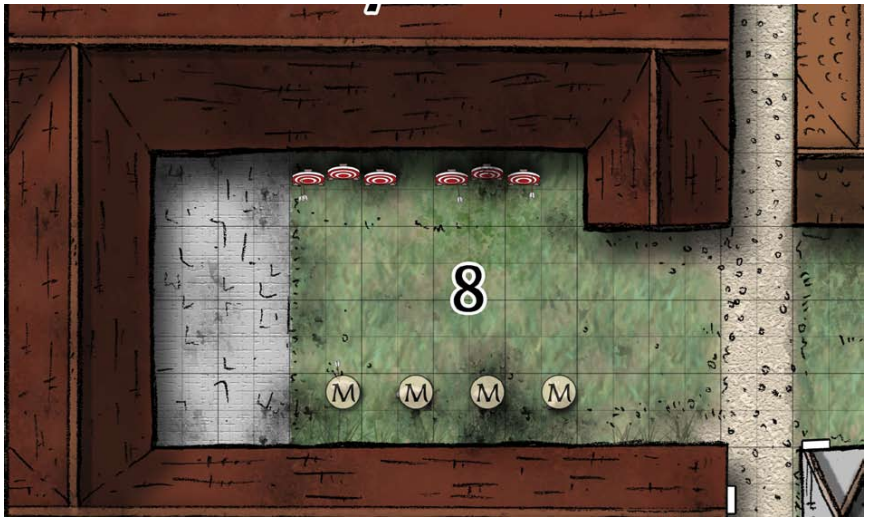
When the practice mannequins attack, read:

The sound of metal grinding on metal grates in your ears, and you turn to see the practice mannequins tearing themselves free of their support and advancing with weapons held at the ready.

Tactics

The practice mannequins team up on the PCs, using *adjustment pattern* to slide the PCs into spaces where they are flanked, allowing another mannequin to attack and knock the PC prone with *overbearing flank*. *Adjustment pattern* is also good for keeping the party's ranged attackers from escaping behind the frontline warriors. A mannequin attacks a White Lotus student if it can't avoid or move past the student to reach a PC.

Features of the Area



Illumination: Daylight affords this encounter area bright light.

Arcane Targets: Scarred from countless years of target practice, each arcane target exudes an aura of enduring magic. A creature in the space of or adjacent to an arcane target takes half damage from arcane ranged and area attacks. It costs 1 extra square to enter an arcane target's space, and a creature there has cover.

Stone Dueling Area: These ancient flagstones are imbued with protective magic to prevent students from being wounded during a duel. A creature in this area gains a +5 bonus to death saving throws.

White Lotus Students: The students are not trained for live battle but do not shy from it. Describe the bolts of fire and eldritch energy they throw from range, though they are not strong enough to impact the fight. The swordmage stands between the mannequins and the other students. A White Lotus student is knocked unconscious when hit once.

4 Practice Mannequins (M)	**Level 7 Controller**
Medium natural animate (construct)	XP 300 each
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +5
HP 80; **Bloodied** 40	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 17	
Immune disease, poison	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
⸸ **Adjustment Pattern** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
One or two creatures; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d8 damage, and slide the target 1 square.	
⸸ **Training Ripost** (immediate reaction, when a melee attack misses the mannequin; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
The triggering creature; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of the mannequin's next turn.	
Overbearing Flank (when the mannequin hits a creature it flanks with an attack)	
The creature is knocked prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 14 (+5)	**Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 2 (-1)
Equipment longsword	

W2: Library Poltergeists

Encounter Level 3 (750 XP)

Setup

3 poltergeists

The Lost Secrets Library is a dangerous place, and the chamber that contains Holman's *Treatise on the Imbuement and Maintenance of Armed Conflict Training Mannequins* is no exception. It contains the vengeful ghosts of three White Lotus students who died there in a tragedy now forgotten.

The ghosts' memories are not so forgiving.

When the PCs enter the room, read:

A large sphere set in the ceiling gives off a flameless glow as you enter the room. The dry smells of cracked leather and ancient paper assault you from the shelving in the wall and the freestanding wooden shelves.

When the last PC enters the room, read:

The door slams shut behind you, and the room falls into complete darkness before the sphere in the ceiling flickers back to life, though it does not shine as brightly as before. A pair of luminescent eyes watches you through the gaps in the freestanding bookcases, and a chorus of whispered voices sounds in your ears, "I was never allowed to leave. Neither shall you be."

Do not place the poltergeists on the map until after the initiative is determined. The poltergeists lurk in the walls, and can attack on the first round from any direction.

Tactics

The three poltergeists work together to slay the PCs. They use the walls and freestanding bookcases to their advantage, phasing through them to avoid attacks between their turns, and using *hurl away* and *kinetic claw* to keep their opponents at bay.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The sphere in the ceiling fills the room with bright illumination, but the study chambers do not have separate lighting. As a result, they have dim illumination with the doors open, or darkness with the doors closed.

Flame Retardant: The Lost Secrets Library is enchanted to protect its contents from fire. Fire attacks deal -2 damage per die, and creatures gain a +2 bonus to saving throws against ongoing fire damage.

Freestanding Bookcases: The bookcases in the center of the room hold many books. Gaps between them are wide enough for a creature to fire ranged attacks through the bookcases, but a creature on the other side has cover and concealment. A creature adjacent to a bookcase can use the following terrain power.

Bookcase	**Single-Use Terrain**
A firm shove sends the bookcase toppling over onto the surprised victims.	
Standard Action	**Area** terrain
Check: Athletics check, DC 17, to shove the bookcase.	
Success: The bookcase falls to one direction, which is chosen by the attacking creature. Each square within 2 squares of the bookcase in that direction, and not north or south of the bookcase, becomes difficult terrain, and each creature in that space is knocked prone.	
Target: Each creature in the affected space	
Attack: +9 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage.	

A bookcase used in this fashion no longer grants cover or concealment to ranged attacks.

Treasure: When the last poltergeist is defeated, its insubstantial body collapses inward and manifests a thin book, which drops to the floor. At its simplest, this is a rare tome valued at one monetary treasure parcel. This might also be a collection of rituals or a book of secrets that leads to future plot hooks and greater treasure.

After defeating the poltergeists, the PCs must still locate the book they seek and find their way out of the library.

3 Poltergeists	**Level 6 Artillery**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 250 each
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 42; **Bloodied** 21	
AC 18; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial	
Speed fly 6 (hover); phasing; see also *flinging rebuke*	
⊕ **Spirit Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 6 necrotic damage.	
✈ **Hurl Away** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.	
✈ **Kinetic Claw** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Necrotic**	
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 10 necrotic damage, and the target slides 5 squares and is restrained (save ends).	
Flinging Rebuke (immediate interrupt, when an enemy moves adjacent to the poltergeist; encounter) ✦ **Necrotic**	
The poltergeist shifts 1 square and uses *hurl away* on the triggering enemy. If the attack hits, the target is knocked prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +15	
Str 15 (+5)	**Dex** 20 (+8)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 17 (+6)	**Int** 13 (+4)	**Cha** 20 (+8)

SC1: The Library

Encounter Level 7 (300 XP)

Setup

To find the tome that Instructor Tevors requires, the PCs must visit the Lost Secrets Library, which is an edifice of arcane and contrary design. Once there, they must locate the book and find their way out again. The following skill challenge has a series of steps within it, and the PCs should move from one to the next as they succeed (or, if they fail, they don't find the book and end up reporting back to Tevors thanks to Obrak's assistance).

The Library **Level 7**
Skill Challenge XP 300

Before you can leave the stacks, you must locate Holman's book on the mannequins.

The PCs must find the book, unseal the door, figure out the library, and leave it during this skill challenge.

Complexity
1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills
See each step in the skill challenge.

Victory
The PCs successfully find the book and leave with it. Instructor Obrak greets them at the door—he had just been looking for them. The party steps out of the library into the broader campus of the White Lotus Academy.

Defeat
The PCs have taken hours at the task and Instructor Obrak finds them as they try to succeed at one of the skill challenge's steps. He finds them rooting through the library, trying to unseal the door, or attempting to escape the library, and he shows them the way out.

Step One: Finding the Book
Before you can leave the stacks, you must locate Holman's book on the mannequins.

Primary Skills History, Perception

History
DC 14 (1 success, maximum 1 success) At least 1 success in this step is necessary to access the Step Two entry below. *The PC recognizes the antiquated method of sorting and shelving books used in the library—or at least in this room—and locates the book among others of its kind.*

Perception
DC 19 (1 success, maximum 1 success) At least 1 success in this step is necessary to access the Step Two entry below. *The character skims book titles and spines, disqualifying any with titles too short or not correct, which allows the PC to find the book in good time.*

Step Two: Unsealing the Door
After 1 success, it becomes clear that the poltergeists not only shut the door behind the PCs, but that they also sealed it.

Primary Skills Arcana, Religion

Arcana
DC 19 (1 success, maximum 1 success) At least 1 success in this step is necessary to access the Step Three entry below. *The character skillfully unweaves the minor spell of binding that was used to seal the group inside the chamber—presumably until they starved and joined the poltergeists in death.*

Religion
DC 14 (1 success, maximum 1 success) At least 1 success in this step is necessary to access the Step Three entry below. *The character performs a short rite to appease the spirits of the students who were here. Afterward, the last of the poltergeists' wills fade from the world, and the ward on the door vanishes.*

Step Three: Learning the Library
After 2 successes in this skill challenge, the PCs discover that the Lost Secrets Library prefers its secrets to remain lost. The stairs and doors open to chambers, stairwells, and hallways that the PCs have not seen before. No windows are around to show them where they are (or through which they can escape), so they must unravel this mystery.

Primary Skills Dungeoneering, Insight

Dungeoneering
DC 14 (1 success, maximum 1 success) At least 1 success in this step is necessary to access the Step Four entry below. *The character knows that dungeons enchanted in this manner have a guiding mind—one that perhaps can be fooled or dealt with. In addition to accruing a success, the party gains a +2 bonus to Bluff checks in the final stage of the challenge.*

Insight
DC 14 (1 success, maximum 1 success) At least 1 success in this step is necessary to access the Step Four entry below. In additional to accruing a success, the party gains a +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks in the final stage of the challenge.
After a number of twists and turns, the character realizes that the library is reacting to what the party says and does, such as putting them in a room with comfortable chairs when they complain of weariness. It also misdirects the character carrying the book most—it must not want to relinquish the volume.

Step Four: Leaving the Library
After 3 successes, the PCs are in a position to convince the Lost Secrets Library that they should be allowed to leave with the book.

Primary Skills Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate

Bluff
DC 14 (1 success, maximum 1 success)
The character misleads the library, moving to open one door and then dashing to another. After a few such tricks, the party finds a window through which they can climb to escape.

Diplomacy
DC 14 (1 success, maximum 1 success)
The character explains to the library that they are removing the book on the authority of Instructor Tevors or the PC swears an oath to return the book, and it is convincing enough that the next door the party opens leads directly outside.

Intimidate
DC 14 (1 success, maximum 1 success)
The character convinces the library that preventing them from leaving with one book can cause the library to lose more books—if it catches the character's drift—and the library stops playing games with the party.

Development

When Instructor Obrak finds them, read the following aloud.

As you step out of the library, a rolling baritone greets you: "Ah, just in time! Tevors needs to speak with you." You find the dwarf, Instructor Obrak, approaching. "He asked you to meet him at the arboretum, by the sundial."

Obrak gives them simple directions at this point.

If the PCs failed the skill challenge, Instructor Obrak finds them and hauls them out of their predicament.

In the middle of your frustration, a rolling baritone surprises you: "I'm glad I've found you! Tevors needs to speak with you."

A dwarf approaches. "I'm Instructor Obrak, by the way. Let me lead you out of here. Tevors asked you to meet him at the arboretum, by the sundial. Oh, and he said this might be of help to you." He hands you a ring of jade with a petal inscribed upon it.

Obrak gives them simple directions at this point, and then leads them out. He waves at that point and says, "Well, off with you!"

W3: Arboretum Ambush

Encounter Level 6 (1,300 XP)

Setup

1 arborean reaper (R)
1 arborean watcher (W)
1 shambling mound (M)
2 vine horror spellfiends (S)

The PCs are going to be disappointed. No instructor waits for them. Instead they must deal with savage plant monsters released from the magic that kept them from harming visitors to the arboretum.

When the PCs near the sundial, read:

The exotic foreign trees and bushes exude several scents, some sharp and some soothing, and they are engaging to the eye. Even the small landscaped fen is pleasant to walk past. A short stone-and-brass sundial stands at a widening of the path ahead, and a bench stands near it, but you do not see Instructor Tevors.

Perception Check
DC 14: *Despite the riot of sensation, you notice that you hear no sound of birdsong or of animal life of any kind.*
DC 19: *You notice bark-skinned humanoids camouflaged against the bark of nearby trees, and you see writhing masses of vines rise from the nearby swampy ground.*
DC 23: *Blades of grass shift, and you see the faintest ripple in the air. Something invisible is here!*

Arborean Reaper (R) **Level 7 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid (plant) XP 300

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +5
HP 81; **Bloodied** 40
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Vulnerable 5 fire (pushed 1 square when it takes fire damage)
Speed 6

⊕ **Scythe** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+14 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the arborean reaper's next turn.

⇙ **Needle Volley** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Poison**
Close blast 3; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Nature +10
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 9 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+3)
Equipment blood-stained robes, scythe

Arborean Watcher (W) **Level 7 Lurker**
Medium natural humanoid (plant) XP 300

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +10
HP 65; **Bloodied** 32
AC 21; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 18
Vulnerable 5 fire (pushed 1 square when it takes fire damage)
Speed 7

⊕ **Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+12 vs. AC; 2d6 + 4 damage.

⇙ **Vine Plague** (standard; encounter)
Close burst 2; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Combat Advantage
When the arborean watcher has combat advantage, its melee attacks deal 2d6 extra damage on a hit.

Arboreal Veil (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**
If no enemy is within 3 squares of it, the arborean watcher gains invisibility until the end of its next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Elven
Skills Athletics +10, Stealth +11
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+5)
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+4)
Equipment robes, short sword

Shambling Mound (M) **Level 9 Brute**
Large natural animate (plant) XP 400

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +4; darkvision
HP 120; **Bloodied** 60
Regeneration 5
AC 21; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17
Immune lightning; see also *lightning affinity*
Speed 4 (swamp walk)

⊕ **Tendrils** (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage.

⊕ **Enveloping Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The shambling mound makes two basic attacks. If both attacks hit the same Medium or smaller target, the shambling mound makes a secondary attack against the target. *Secondary Attack:* +12 vs. Fortitude; the target is pulled into the shambling mound's space and restrained (save ends). While the target is restrained, no creature has line of sight or line of effect to it. At the start of the shambling mound's turn each round, the enveloped target takes 10 damage and the shambling mound regains 10 hit points. The shambling mound can envelop 2 creatures at a time. When the target saves, it reappears in a square of its choice adjacent to the shambling mound.

Lightning Affinity (immediate reaction, when hit by a lightning attack; at-will) ✦ **Healing**
The shambling mound regains 10 hit points.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Stealth +10
Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 12 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+4)
Con 20 (+9) **Int** 5 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+4)

2 Vine Horror Spellfiends (S)		Level 7 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (plant)		XP 300 each
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +10; blindsight 10	
HP 65; **Bloodied** 32		
AC 19; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15		
Speed 6 (forest walk, swamp walk), swim 6		
⊕ **Claw** (standard; at-will)		
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.		
⊕ **Shock Orb** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**		
Ranged 10; +12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 lightning damage.		
⊕ **Lashing Vine of Dread** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear**		
Ranged 5; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares.		
✲ **Caustic Cloud** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Acid**		
Area burst 1 within 10; +10 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 3 acid damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 acid damage and is blinded (save ends both).		
Malleability		
The vine horror can compress its body enough to squeeze through a 1-inch-wide crack. Cracks and other openings that are more than 1 inch wide do not slow the vine horror at all.		
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common, Elven	
Skills Stealth +12		
Str 18 (+7)	**Dex** 18 (+7)	**Wis** 14 (+5)
Con 17 (+6)	**Int** 11 (+3)	**Cha** 10 (+3)

Tactics

All the monsters hunger to indulge their vicious natures after feeling bound to be peaceful within the academy's exotic arboretum for so long. The reaper targets a dangerous single foe, such as a defender or striker, and keeps that creature marked so that the shambling mound can rampage freely. The mound attempts to pull enemies into the fen, where it is more mobile than they are. The vine horrors keep the reaper and the shambling mound between them and the melee PCs while pelting artillery or anyone they can reach with their spells, and they are happy to use *lashing vine of dread* to push enemies into the grip of their allies. The arborean watcher begins the fight invisible and remains invisible with *arboreal veil* until it can catch as many victims in its *vine plague* as possible—a tactic it repeats. When the shambling mound becomes bloodied, the spellfiends take turns targeting it with *shock orb* in an attempt to keep their meat shield alive.

Features of the Area

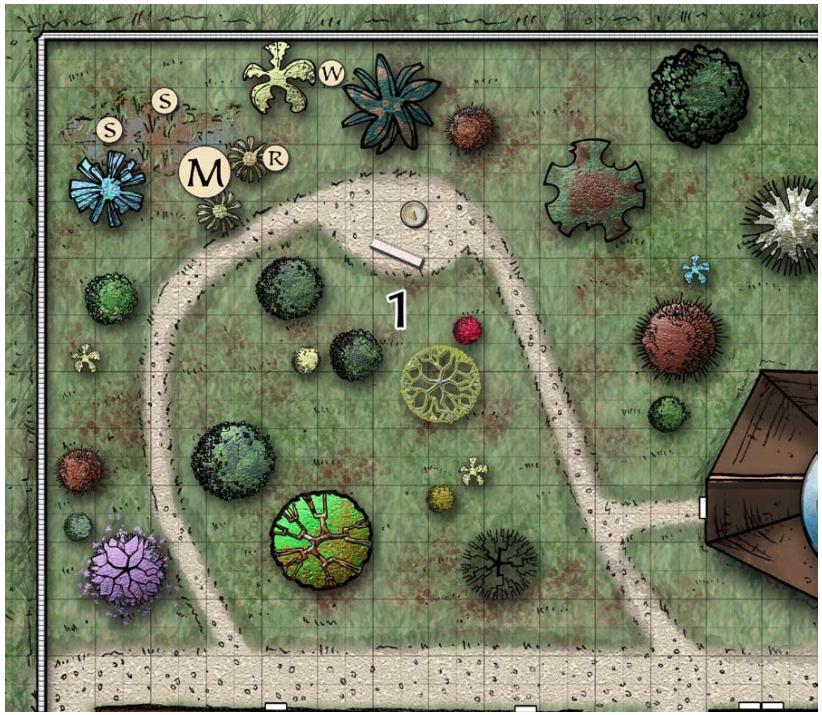
Illumination: Daylight affords this encounter area bright light.

Fen: The swamp squares are difficult terrain for creatures without swamp walk.

Meditative Sundial: This sundial causes time to pass just a touch more slowly around it. A creature within 3 squares of the sundial can take an additional minor action on its turn.

Tevors's Jade Ring: The plant monsters prefer to attack the character carrying the jade ring. They gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against that character, or a +1 bonus to attack rolls if it is carried but not worn.

Exotic Trees: Some of these trees have unripe exotic fruit hanging from their branches. A creature in melee range with such a tree can use the following terrain power.



Exotic Fruit Trees	Single-Use Terrain
A quick leap and a swipe knocks a bulbous fruit off a nearby tree.	
Standard Action	**Close** burst 1
Check: Athletics check or melee attack roll, DC 17, to knock the fruit down.	
Target: Each creature in burst	
Attack: +11 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of your next turn.	
Special: If a creature trying to knock the fruit down is also a target of the attack, the creature gains a +5 bonus to Reflex against the attack.	

W4: Spell Weaver

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

Setup

1 spell weaver collector (S)

When the PCs dash to the headmaster's residence, they find that Instructor Tevors is a spell weaver collector with designs on the school's great arcane resources. To preserve its deception, the spell weaver attacks them.

When the PCs reach the courtyard gate, read:

Through the wrought-iron fence, you see a person in a heavy sky-blue robe standing over Headmaster Marovic, where a moment and a few steps ago you saw nothing. Though you can't make out the details, something about the person looks askew.

Arcana

DC 14: *You have stepped across the threshold of a magical veil. Now that you are within it, you can see and hear those within it.*

When the PCs enter the courtyard, read:

Now that you are closer, you can see what bothered you about the person standing over the headmaster. Six thin, blue-skinned arms emerge from beneath the robe, two of which are tracing patterns in the air toward Marovic, and the creature's head looks completely alien. It turns toward you, and you know it means you harm.

Spell Weaver Collector (S) Level 7 Solo Controller
Medium immortal humanoid XP 1,500

Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +11
Arcane Bolster aura 2; at the start of the spell weaver's turn, it gains temporary hit points equal to the level of the highest-level magic item within the aura.
HP 312; **Bloodied** 156
AC 21; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 21
Saving Throws +5
Speed 6, teleport 6
Action Points 2

Esoteric Touch (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force**
+11 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 force damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 force damage (save ends).

Esoteric Bolt (minor; at-will) ✦ **Lightning, Thunder**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 3 lightning damage, and the target is blinded (save ends), and each creature adjacent to the target takes 1d6 + 3 thunder damage.

Banishing Sign (minor; at-will) ✦ **Teleportation**
+11 vs. Reflex; the target disappears to a place where it can see reflections of itself in every direction (save ends). While there, the target cannot target any creature or be targeted by any creature. When the target saves, he returns to his previous space, or the nearest unoccupied space.

Repulsing Touch (minor; at-will) ✦ **Force**
+11 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 force damage, and push the target 5 squares.

Extract Arcane Soul (minor; requires *chromatic disk*; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞) ✦ **Healing, Psychic**
Ranged 5; bloodied arcane targets only; +13 vs. Will; 1d8 + 9 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). *Miss:* Half damage. *Effect*: The spell weaver regains 24 hit points.

Flametrap Invocation (minor; at-will) ✦ **Fire**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 4 fire damage, and the target is immobilized and each creature adjacent to the target at the start of the target's turn takes 1d8 + 4 fire damage (save ends).

Sharing of Minds (minor; at-will) ✦ **Charm, Psychic**
Ranged 10; +11 vs. Will; 1d6 + 3 psychic damage, and the target is dazed and attacks the nearest creature with its standard action on its turn (save ends both).

Arctic Rune (minor; at-will) ✦ **Cold**
Close blast 3; +11 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 3 cold damage, and slide the target 1 square.

Battle Arcana (immediate reaction, when the spell weaver takes damage; recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞, or at-will while bloodied)
The spell weaver takes a minor action or a move action.

Multitasking Brain
When dazed, a spell weaver takes a standard action and a minor action on its turn, instead of just a standard action, and can still take immediate actions.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** telepathy (sight)
Skills Arcana +18, Insight +16
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 20 (+8) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Equipment robes, *chromatic disk*

Tactics

The spell weaver collector spreads its attacks across the PCs, avoiding useless overlap with the attack's effect. It teleports to and from the balconies to keep away from melee attackers. It also uses *battle arcana* early after its turn to cover more of the party with conditions or partway through the round to reapply effects that might have lapsed. It uses *extract arcane soul* at every opportunity.

Features of the Area

Illumination: Since evening has fallen, the courtyard is in dim light.

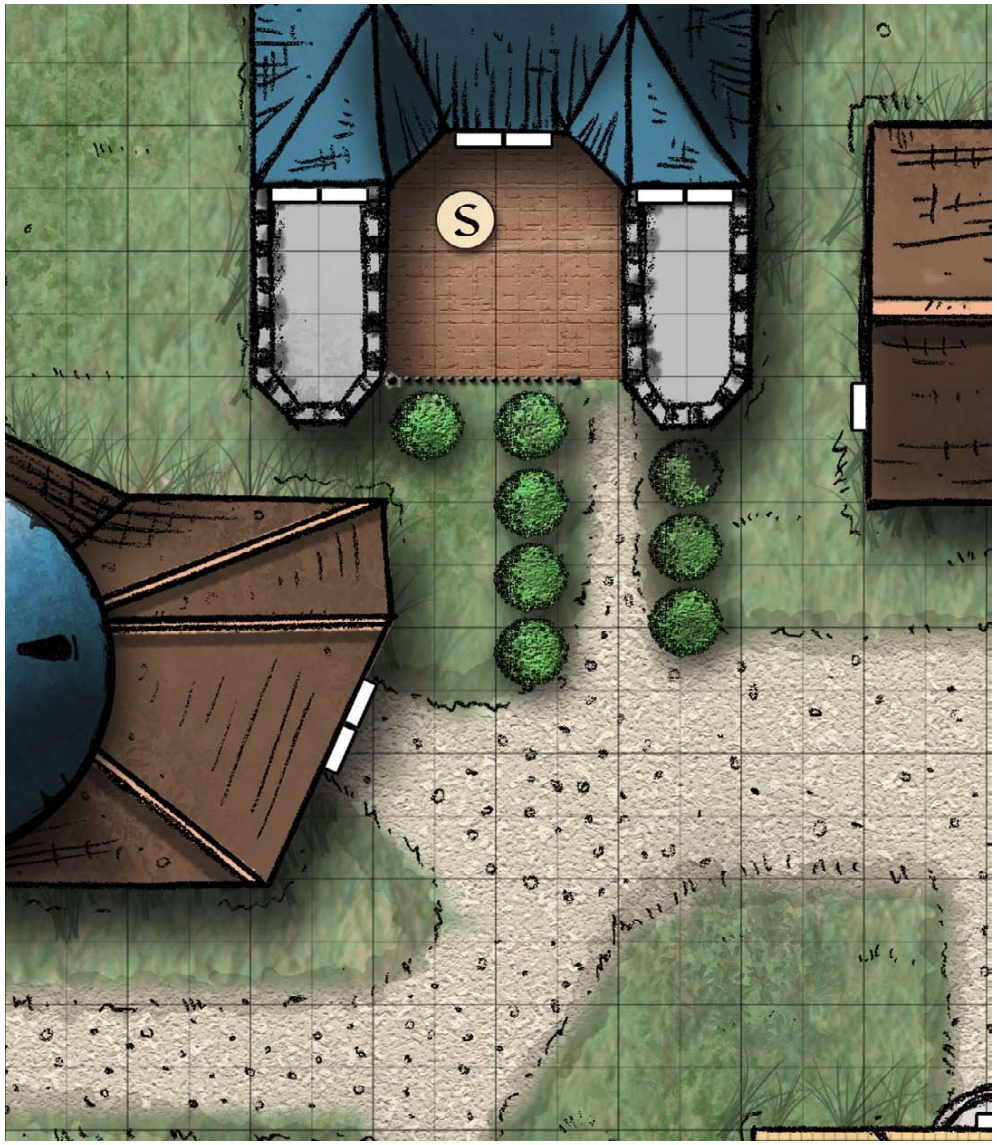
Balconies: The balconies are 10 feet above the courtyard. The doors into the residence are glass; they are locked but are easily breakable. Moving from the balcony doors to the inside of the courtyard doors requires a move action.

Courtyard Doors: The courtyard doors are heavy oak and are sealed with magic. They require a DC 19 Athletics check to break through. To move from the courtyard doors to the balcony doors is a move action that requires a DC 14 Athletics check.

Treasure: The spell weaver carries a pouch with *residuum* equivalent to one monetary treasure parcel, and its *chromatic disk* can be reduced to the same or used to upgrade an existing magic item as part of an item treasure parcel.

About the Author

Wherever there is danger, Peter Schaefer is probably watching on CCTV. His plots are widespread and manipulate the future of this planet. Plans for being a mastermind aside, Peter shapes the present as a Wizards of the Coast developer. When the apocalypse comes, his private island will take to the skies and disappear into probability space, where he, his wife, and his cats will be safe. Probably.



Social Skill Challenges, Part 2

BY MIKE MEARLS

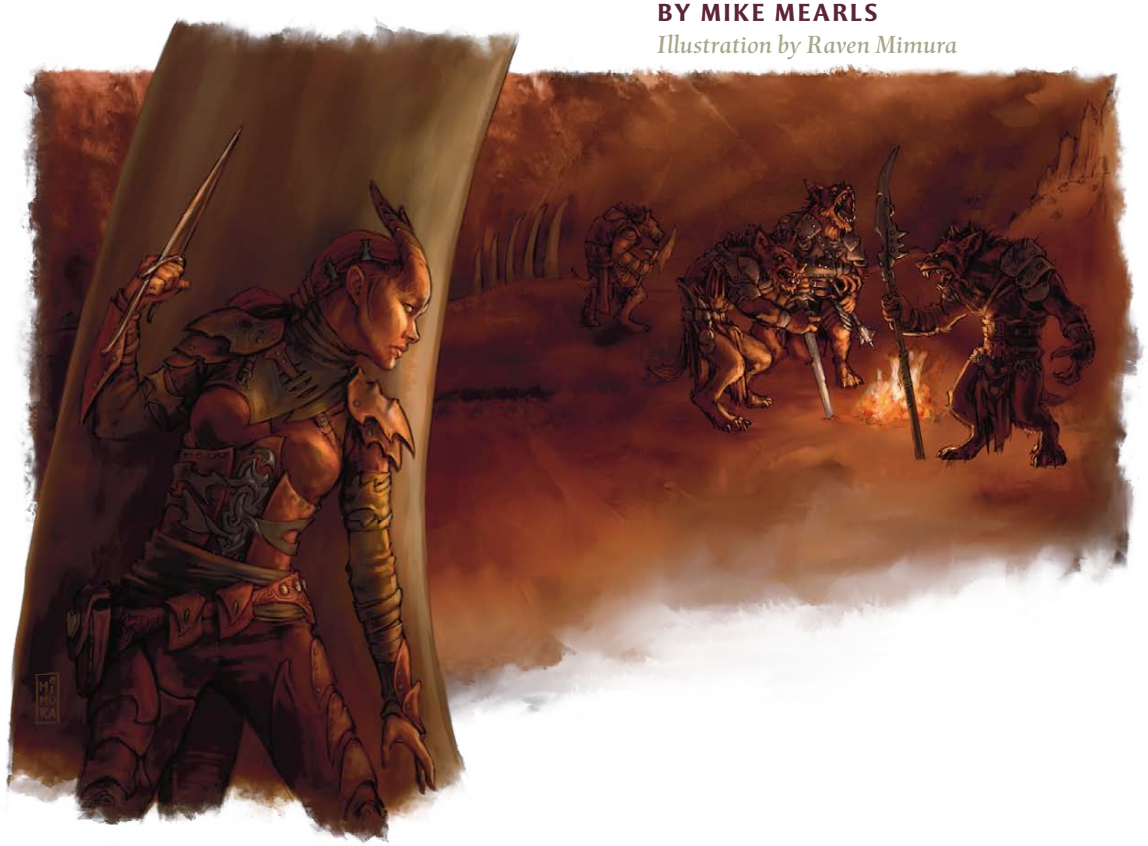


Illustration by Raven Mimura

Once again, it's time to talk skill challenges. In this month's installment, I am going to design a skill challenge for social situations. This challenge is based on a request sent in by an intrepid reader, culled from the small mountain of emails that came in. If you're new to the series, it helps to go back to last month's column to see how we got to where we are.

For this article, rather than give specific DCs, I've listed them as hard, moderate, or easy. Use the table on page 42 of the DMG to set the correct DC based on the challenge's level.

Skill Challenge: Haggling

This skill challenge comes from Scott Scarborough. Scott wants a skill challenge you can use when haggling with a merchant. As a word of caution, be wary of handing out a consistent discount on magic items, since that can let the players buy more items than they should have and it could grind the game to a halt if the PCs haggle over everything they buy. Of course, if you like that style of play, have at it!

The key to this skill challenge is that the merchant has something the PCs want. Now they need to convince him to hand it over at a reasonable price. The merchant wants the highest price he can extract.

Complexity

This is a complexity 1 skill challenge. The PCs need 4 successes before 3 failures. For a more involved negotiation, you can break down the individual items or concessions the PCs bargain over into multiple challenges. For instance, if negotiating an alliance with a neighboring duchy, the PCs might face three complexity 1 challenges; one to join a military alliance against a common enemy, one to open trade relations for weapons and armor, and a third to allow the PCs' army the use of the duchy's roads to launch an attack on an orc horde.

Breaking down one event into several small skill challenges is a good way to measure partial success without fiddling with a big challenge.

Primary Skills

Social skills, along with a keen eye to see when the merchant is ready to break, are needed to swing a price in your favor.

Varied Skills: Negotiation requires a steady hand and the ability to think quickly. The same arguments or gambits used over and over again work against the party when arguing with a merchant. When the PCs succeed at a primary skill, they cannot attempt that skill again until they try a different primary skill. This wrinkle on a skill challenge is a good way to force the characters to use different skills, but it also is a handy way to model how conversations play out in real life. During a debate, making the same point in the same manner over and over again is a good way to lose your audience and alienate listeners. You can come back to a point, but you can't afford to belabor it.

Bluff (Hard DC): The PCs can try to convince a merchant that they have no interest in meeting this price. This strategy can backfire if the merchant sees through their ruse and remains firm or if they overplay their hand and make it clear how much they need the item. Each time they succeed in a Bluff check, they gain a cumulative +2 bonus on all other checks in this skill challenge. The first time the PCs fail a Bluff check, they can no longer use this skill in the challenge and the bonus they gained (if any) turns into a penalty.

Diplomacy (Moderate DC): Honeyed words work well in swaying the merchant's opinion, but talk too long and he grows tired of the endless dickering. Each Diplomacy check the party attempts, whether successful or not, increases this DC by 2.

Insight (Moderate DC): An Insight check allows a PC to see through the merchant's own ruses. The characters can gain up to 2 successes with this skill, and each success allows them to re-roll one Bluff or Diplomacy check during the encounter.

Secondary Skills

History (Hard DC): A History check allows a PC to recall some details about past transactions and the typical price for the item. It can also point out flaws in an item to help drive down its price. If a PC succeeds on a History check, he grants one other PC a +4 bonus to his next Diplomacy skill check. The PCs can successfully use this skill once during the challenge.

Intimidate (Moderate DC): An Intimidate check allows the PCs to employ brute force in getting what they want. The result of an Intimidate check depends on the number of successes the PCs have accrued. If they have 0, 1, or 2, a successful Intimidate check reduces the Bluff DC from Hard to Moderate. If the PCs have 3 successes, a successful Intimidate check grants them the final success.

On each failed Intimidate check, increase the DC of all skill checks by 2.

Streetwise (Moderate DC): With Streetwise, the PCs can establish the current market value of the item and drop hints of other vendors who can offer a better price. On a successful check, the PCs have two options. They can either reduce the Insight DC on this challenge by 1, as their display of knowledge forces the merchant to overplay his hand, or they can reduce both failures and successes on the challenge to 0 as they seek out a new merchant to haggle with. The PCs can only use the second option once, but they can continue to reduce the Insight DC more than once.

The Aid Another Conundrum

Some DMs find that the aid another action undermines skill challenges. After all, for players who want to succeed at a challenge, the safest bet is to have every PC use aid another to give a bonus to the PC with the highest skill bonus.

Aid another was originally intended to allow the PCs to work together to overcome a high DC skill check. It was never intended as a tool to short circuit skill challenges.

The pig pile of aid another is boring, as it reduces the challenge to a simple series of die rolls. If you crunch the numbers, it becomes clear that this strategy is nearly unbeatable. Here are some suggestions for encouraging the PCs to stop abusing this option.

Higher DC: Change the DC to the normal check's DC -5. This represents the difficulty in providing a skilled-enough effort to actually aid a fellow character.

Consequences: Aid another is great because there's no cost for failure. Adding one forces the PCs to weigh its use. A failed aid another causes a -4 penalty instead of a +2 bonus. This mechanic is best when the character doing the aiding still has to interact with an NPC or otherwise take an active part in the target character's final check. If he messes up, the PC he tried to help must recover.

Limited Aid: Only 1 PC can attempt to aid a check. This mechanic works best when there is only enough space or time for one character to help out. In social situations, it represents the reality that five characters all talking to one NPC are likely to confuse things or create a garbled message.

Sustained Effort: The characters must score at least 2 successes for each pass around the table (or in the time period that each PCs' checks takes place) or the characters suffer an automatic failure. This option works best in time-sensitive challenges, because it pushes the party to complete the challenge as quickly as possible.

Aid Another

The characters can aid each other in this skill challenge, but the merchant grows weary of having an entire mob of customers hounding him about a price. Each time a PC attempts to aid, the DC needed to aid increases by 2. In addition, a failed aid another attempt grants the target PC a -4 penalty to his next check. This penalty is cumulative.

Success and Failure

The ebb and flow of the negotiation brings this encounter to life. With each check, be sure to portray the merchant and make clear the current price he demands.

The item's starting point is 110% of its normal price. For each success, reduce the price by 5%. Most negotiators start at a price higher than what they expect to get rather than the standard market value. Once the PCs have 3 failures, the merchant refuses to negotiate any further. If the PCs insist on wasting more of his time, he kicks them out. Perhaps other, paying customers arrive to do business with him. Perhaps in future negotiations with that specific merchant, the price starts at 120%.

This challenge assumes that a 10% discount on an item is a good ending point. You can also use it when the PCs need to buy an item that relates solely to the story of your campaign (the key needed to open a locked door in a nearby dungeon).

Mixing Things Up

You can modify this skill challenge to better represent the merchant's personality and background. Religion can replace History when dealing with a cleric of Pelor who sells potions of healing, while Dungeoneering takes the place of Streetwise when negotiating with a dwarf prospector.

You can also shift the effects of different skills. The fence who wants to sell something to the PCs treats Bluff just like Diplomacy, while Intimidate uses the effects for Bluff. The PCs can browbeat him, since he can't simply call in the town guard to complain about the threats. After all, he deals in stolen goods. On the other hand, weak or empty threats backfire as the fence becomes convinced the PCs lack the means or will to enforce them.

By building simple frameworks and then finding ways to swap skills back and forth, you can re-use a skill challenge over and over again. The skills used and your portrayal of the NPCs still make each encounter unique.

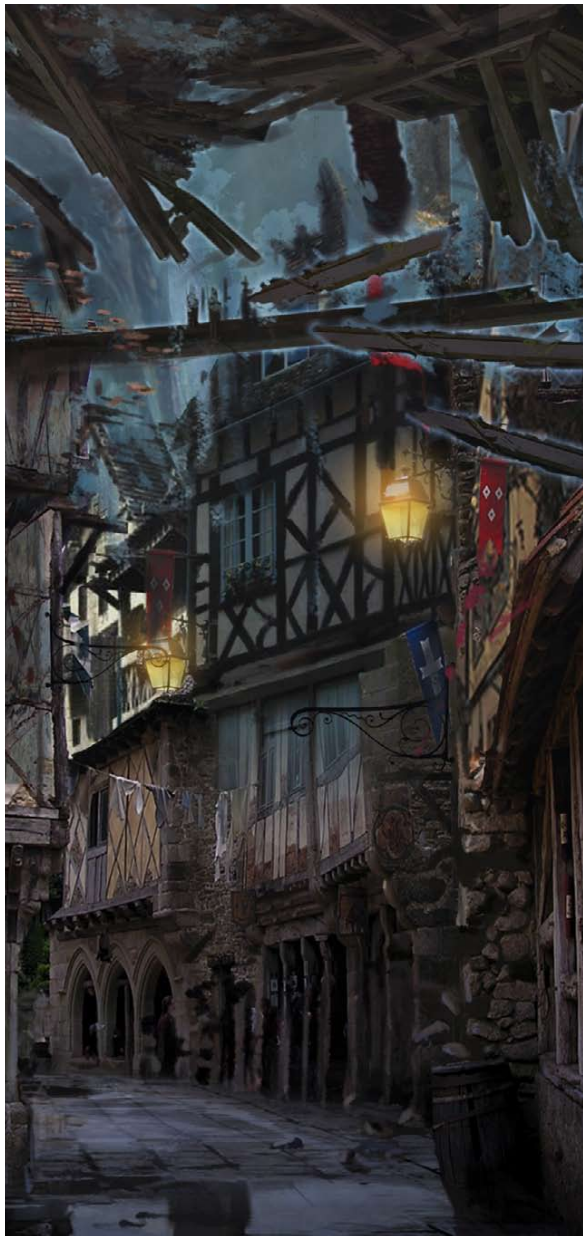
The ebb and flow of the negotiation brings this encounter to life. With each check, be sure to portray the merchant and make clear the current price he demands.

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Lead Designer for the Dungeons & Dragons® Roleplaying Game. His recent credits include *H1: Keep on the Shadowfell* and *Player's Handbook 2*.

The Tangle of Threads

by Stephen Radney-MacFarland
illustration by Rob Alexander



Dungeons & Dragons is a big game. And by big, I mean it's a frigg'n fat behemoth of a game, rolling roughshod with imagination. Think about it; it's an improv game, wrapped in good old-fashioned who-done-it, coated in a creamy story-telling exercise, with a crispy crunch from a solid, wicked-fun combat engine. But sometimes, it can be hard to get through all those layers (damn you, delicious crunchy crust!). Unless you're a master storyteller (and few of us are), getting to those inner layers is a challenge that involves a lot of trial and error ... especially error. Over the years, the trials and errors on my part have led me to use a thread system for D&D storytelling. This month, I'm going to expand on the idea of threads.

Last month, we looked at some information exchange tricks particular to D&D that you can use to convey story information quickly and concisely. We also examined some pitfalls in D&D narrative information exchange that are all too common yet easy to avoid. This month, I'll get into how to use these threads and how to keep track of them so they don't get tangled.

Lay Out Your Threads

Last month, I presented a way of giving out information that splits it into packets corresponding to Perception, Insight, or even various knowledge check DCs. There was the general information that everyone should get (standard read-aloud text)—the very basics of what players need in order to understand the scene you are presenting. There was the information your players get if they just ask (the moderate DC). There was a DC that rewarded build (the hard DC), and one that rewarded build plus good rolling (hard DC +5). Often, I'll place some extra information at the level of the hard DC +5 (or even at just the hard DC) and designate it as "threads." These threads are story-relevant information that either introduces new tangles in the tale or grant the PCs a bit of extra knowledge that can aid them in the encounters they're about to face (revealing to the PCs that the rider was a hobgoblin in last month's example did both). Other times, these threads introduce a new aspect of the world or some fact that becomes relevant later in the campaign (the skull and snake motif on the hobgoblin's armor and barding was a thread of this variety).

Often, I'll know exactly what I want to do with these threads. I use them as foreshadowing, enticements, to provide information that gives the characters a strategic edge, or that give them a helpful nudge in a direction they've overlooked. At other times I keep these threads more open, more mysterious. Most of the time, threads deal with the story or challenges lying directly ahead of the PCs; at other times, they hint at something of future importance.

For instance, I have this resin miniature of that orange demon idol on the cover of the 1st edition Player's Handbook. The thing is part of a particularly nasty thread in my campaign that'll reach fruition in the epic levels of play. So far, my players have come across it twice. Each time, they've had the opportunity to find out new information about it and its significance. Now, to be honest, while I have some plans for the idol's significance, these plans are merely a sketch of the final work that'll eventually play out—sort of my campaign's version of the Dharma Initiative from "Lost"—something that pops up in unexpected or seemingly inexplicable places, has gravitas, but its story congeals only after time and more instances of character interaction.

Every Thread Has an Ultimate Purpose (Even if You Don't Know It Yet)

When creating a thread, you should try to come up with its ultimate purpose, at least in a very general way. I know that my old-school demon structure will eventually lead to an epic threat. I have a good idea of what that threat entails, but I don't know the particulars yet.

Sometimes you can't do this. Sometimes an idea is just cool, and you place it with only a glimmer of a notion of its ultimate purpose. That's OK too. These glimmer threads usually occur with a bout of inspiration during game play. You blurt it out and see the enthusiasm spread across the game table. When this happens, make sure you keep track of it and that it gains ultimate purpose at some point.

Just behind my DM's screen, among my dice, is a stack of sticky notes. They're there for these very moments of spontaneous thread creation. After the game, I'll transcribe my notes in a journal, carefully noting what I said and brainstorming some ideas for the thread's ultimate purpose. I'll revisit my journal each time I prepare for a session, carefully placing follow-up threads in the game when it seems appropriate or annotating ideas in my journal. It's these moments of reexamining and revisiting that will help jell the ultimate purpose of my impromptu threads.

Sometimes an idea is just cool, and you place it with only a glimmer of a notion of its ultimate purpose.

Simply put, these threads are there to link encounters into story in a minimalistic way that's easy to disseminate. They also serve as story rewards by giving the characters and their players a deeper understanding of the story and world they're interacting with and the threats they are facing. The more mysterious ones are create a sense of depth in the game world. When players know they've stumbled upon something important but inexplicable, they search for the answers, often with the same urgency typically reserved for chasing after treasure.

Lately, I've been working on a campaign wiki through Obsidian Portal, which has a wonderful DM-only view function. I'm slowly transcribing my thread journal into the portal. That allows me to cross reference my various threads, which I find to be a very helpful tool. When the information from a thread becomes common knowledge, I'll move it out of the DM-only section, and my players can then reference it. You gotta love good DM tools!

Keep Things Close to Your Chest

If you're like me, you come up with "really good" ideas for your campaign (or, sigh, some other campaign you'd like to run; damn you, DM ADD) on a weekly, if not daily, basis. You'll be excited about these new ideas, and you'll want to talk about them. It's natural. It's fine. But whatever you do, don't talk to your players about them, and absolutely don't talk about them to your players as if they are already part of the campaign.

Like needless exposition in read-aloud text or extraneous details while describing an encounter area, long bouts of babbling at players about what you are doing or what you want to do with the campaign can hurt your overall narrative. Let them ponder, keep them guessing, heighten their appetite.

Keeping your mouth shut also serves a second purpose—it allows you to change things on the fly when a better idea comes along (and they will). Stories do not spring to life, complete and indivisible. Creating a good story from your various threads is an organic process that must allow for revision and changes, often more than once. Novelists and screenplay writers discuss how their characters can surprise

them—this is literally true in a D&D game, where the characters are under someone else's control. Your storytelling must be able to adapt to their actions.

Ultimate Purpose

Throughout this column, I've hovered around the idea of a thread's ultimate purpose. Next month, I'll tackle the process of building ultimate purposes for threads and bringing them to fruition, along with spinning thread into roleplaying encounters that don't involve skill challenges. Until then, let's take a look at some letters in the mail bag.

And Around This Corner ... Slaughter Hall

I started playing D&D when 4th Edition came out, and I am now the DM for a group of friends. I really love it so far. We're having a lot of fun, but I'm running into a problem. I want to craft a huge dungeon for my players to go through. My problem is that I'm unsure how to present them with a map that lets them know they can explore this place for days, without actually giving away what's around the next turn. I'm frustrated by the dichotomy of how to present my players with maps without giving away what comes next.

– Chris of the Endless Dungeons

Start by giving them a map fragment of your dungeon. Have maybe a half-dozen rooms with some vague clues or riddles, and many doorways, corridors, and rooms that fade into a blank page. They'll make short work of those areas and wonder what lies beyond. From there, encourage them to keep a map.

Back in my second edition days, I ran a Forgotten Realms game that was basically just a huge crawl through the massive Undermountain. One of my players meticulously mapped areas of the dungeon on large sheets of graph paper, and he and the other players used them to plan out their next route of exploration. The mapping player always said that he wanted to explore the entire dungeon, and although that never happened, the desire kept the game going a long time.

By "unique aspect to the session," do you mean that they are being inconsiderate jerks?

If the starter map doesn't do it for you, show them the extent of what lies ahead by placing doorway after doorway, corridor after corridor, as shadowy glimpses ahead of them. A dazzling display of choices will get your point across.

When all else fails, just tell them, like you told me. Often the best way to get your point across is to say it.

Now Seating a Table of Three to Eight

With the way my group handles sessions, we might have anywhere from 3 to 8 PCs (though we usually average 5-6), and there's no real way of knowing how many people will be there beforehand. At best, I usually only know for sure a few hours before the session. The extra PCs outside of the core are usually just our friends who like to jump in maybe every other session or so, and they really add a unique aspect to the sessions they attend. I feel it would be a waste to just not let them come, but it's hard to prepare the encounters when the player numbers and classes vary this much.

– Zach the Incredible Juggling DM

By "unique aspect to the session," do you mean that they are being inconsiderate jerks? I don't know the reason these folks can't let you know whether they are coming. Maybe they are firefighters who are always on call. Or maybe they figure you'll let them play no matter what and only show up when they can drag themselves out of bed. But, if it's more of the latter than the former, it's time to have a serious talk with them. Their inability to commit to a game is not fair to you or the other players.

Rudeness aside, there are some useful techniques for structuring your encounters to account for a variable number of characters. Start with the lowest number of players you're expecting. In your case, that's three players (or is it 5?). Now flip to pages 56 and 57 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Find the character levels on the charts on each page. Subtract the "Standard Monster" XP (page 56) value for the appropriate character level on the "Experience Points Rewards" table from the same level "4 PC" XP number on the "Target Encounter XP Totals" chart (page 57). That's going to be your XP budget for your baseline encounters. Because three is a pretty small number and you'll not have a good spread of rolls, it's better to err on the easy side when making these encounters. Skirmishers, minions, brutes, and a small number of artillery tend to be better than large numbers of soldiers, frequent controllers, lurkers, or elites. Just forget solos, at least for now.

After you have your baseline designed, start creating brackets of augmentations for the encounter. With each additional player, add a creature or creatures that are worth the "Standard Monster" XP value. Often these will be as simple as notes like, "one more mummy champion." Other times, they will involve complicated swaps of old stat blocks for new ones.

And Now a Table for One

Right now, I'm running a small game. Do you have any suggestions for DMs who don't have many players? How can I run a game for as few as one player and make it fun? Do you have any plot hooks or design suggestions that could help me move beyond the convention of the stereotypical group of around 5 people?

- One-at-a-Time Andrew

Well, Andrew, some of the suggestions I gave Zach can also serve you well. When it comes to combat encounters, reducing the number of monsters and keeping the strengths and weaknesses of your characters' roles in mind go a long way toward creating fun and interesting D&D encounters for very few, even single, characters. You'll want to keep track of the characters' skill pool and either avoid or tone down challenges that require skills the characters don't have. I'm mostly talking about Thievery here, but just about any skill can be a culprit.

As far as hooks go, the sky's the limit. In fact, there are a number of action adventure tropes that work really well with a small number of characters or the single character. Think of movies such as *A Fistful of Dollars*, *Diehard*, *Kill Bill*, *Batman*, or any James Bond film. Action-adventure is rife with stories of one against many. Use lower-level creatures and minions for mooks. Use higher-level critters and elites for major villains and bosses. Just stay away from solos.

... a number of action adventure tropes ... work really well with a small number of characters or the single character

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when **Stephen Radney-MacFarland** came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.
Once that RPGA guy, Stephen is now a developer in RPG R&D where he doesn't create the traps... he just makes them deadlier. He also teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

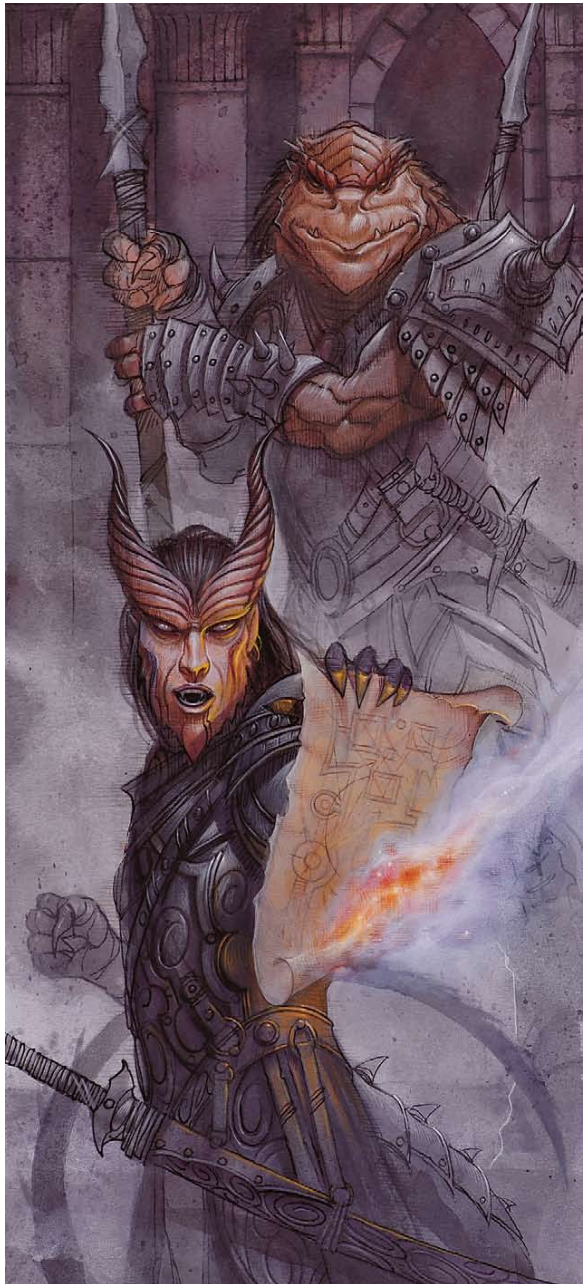
Clog Our Mailbox!

Your game needs saving, or you have some game saving advice of your own? Drop us a line at dndinsider@wizards.com with the worlds Save My Game as your subject line. Maybe next month we'll talk about your problem or feature some bit of advice that comes from the mailbag.

You can also join the game saving conversation on our message boards, but piping in on the discussion of DM tips and tricks. Stephen makes it a point to visit and chat with those who agree and disagree with him.

Episode 13: Backgrounds

by James Wyatt
Illustration by Wayne England



A couple of vacations have overlapped to make Greenbrier gaming scarce since I wrote last. We played once three weeks ago, when I ran the opening two encounters from the Scales of War adventure "Rescue at Rivenroar." I re-skinned the ogre in the second encounter as something midway between an ogre and a foulborn hulk (which is to say, I sort of un-skinned it), and had the goblins yelling "Revenge!" as they threw torches around the little village of Greenbrier.

In fact, the attack interrupted a meeting of the town elders in which the characters were describing the events that took place in the chasm, and it seems clear that the attack was a reprisal for the characters' incursion into the goblin-filled caves near the top of Greenbrier Chasm. The characters reached 2nd level at the end of that session.

Today, I started running the adventure we're releasing for Free RPG Day this year — an Eberron adventure penned by Keith Baker, which conveniently features degenerate cultists and twisted aberrant monstrosities. With a slightly diminished group (two players out), we got through about half of the short adventure, as the characters hacked their way through more hobgoblins (replacing the orcs in the original adventure) and weirdly twisted human cultists from the village, bearing eyes in strange places across their bodies ... .

So how am I doing in terms of the overall campaign arc I sketched out back in Episode 3? So far, so good. My plan has been to have the characters mucking around in the upper levels of the chasm through 3rd level. They've just hit 2nd level, and this adventure should take them to 3rd. I'll need to plan one last expedition into the chasm to occupy 3rd level and make sure to lay seeds within that adventure to take them on to Tower Watch afterward, which I've penciled in to occupy them through 4th and 5th levels.

Character Backgrounds

Last time, I mentioned how the background from PH2 that Chris Youngs chose for his character let me tie him into the overarching story of the campaign a little better, and I promised I'd secure backgrounds from the rest of the players and show how I do the same thing for them. Here's what I have.

Uldane: Avandra's Kiss

Bill chose one of the halfling racial backgrounds from *Player's Handbook 2* for Uldane. He wrote:

Avandra's Kiss: *Uldane has a birthmark on his shoulder that looks like Avandra's holy symbol, and this led to his fascination and eventual decision to become a*

paladin. His mother always told him that Avandra had chosen him and marked him so that everyone would know it. +2 bonus to Heal.

Uldane and Turuk both worship Avandra, the god of change who "delights in freedom, trade, travel, adventure, and the frontier" (according to the *Player's Handbook*). If I were creating this campaign from scratch, that might incline me toward a different flavor of campaign — perhaps one where the characters were struggling against a tyrant or otherwise serving as champions of freedom. Given what I've already laid out for the campaign, it's hard for me to fit that in.

Avandra also isn't one of the deities I initially figured would be connected to an organization like the Society of the Sanctified Mind (which I've linked to Ioun) or the Topaz Order (which I decided would be tied to Bahamut, Moradin, and Pelor).

That just means I need to work a little harder to make sure that Uldane's devotion to Avandra makes him feel like a part of my world and its story.

So here's a thought: The first Keepers were the adventurers who bound the Speaker in Dreams beneath what's now Greenbrier Chasm. Say there were five of them, and suppose that each one was responsible for a shrine within the underground complex beneath the chasm that helped bind the Speaker in Dreams. The shrine to Ioun was the first one of those five shrines. The second one can be a shrine to Avandra.

Furthermore, maybe the unfortunate similarity of names between my Keepers and the Keepers of the Cerulean Sign (from *Lords of Madness*) is not a coincidence or an oversight. (Combined with the keeper monster from *Manual of the Planes*, I was about ready to change the name of the Keepers organization.) Maybe the organization I've been calling the Keepers is in fact the Keepers of the Cerulean Sign, and that Sign is the power these adventurers invoked to bind the Speaker in Dreams. So the Keepers of the Cerulean Sign, which I had already thought about incorporating into the campaign by the time the characters get to Lake Town, will have some ties to both Avandra and Ioun —because the founders of the Keepers worshiped those gods (probably among others).

Besides which, an organization that's all about freeing mortals from thralldom to aberrant cults and masterminds seems like a natural fit for Avandra's injunction to "strike back against those who would rob you of your freedom and urge others to fight for their own liberty."

So for now, Uldane can go on feeling like a lone crusader for Avandra's cause, but down the line, he'll realize that he's a part of something bigger.

Grimbold: Poor Forest Criminal

Rich chose three backgrounds from *PH2* — one about geography, one about society, and one about occupation. He wrote:

Grimbold is a poor forest criminal. Forest is the primary background.

Darned if that hasn't made me think a little bit more about the character's story. I think he was running around

as a masked highwayman robbing folks every now and then when money ran low.

I took the +2 Perception.

Rich has so far resisted getting drawn into the storylines of the campaign. In terms of the player motivations from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, Rich is a self-avowed thinker (putting the emphasis on tactical thinking) with a strong dose of slayer, and it's pretty clear that what he wants out of a lunchtime game is lots of slaying. So asking him to choose a background, as the second paragraph of his email suggested, forced him to think more about Grimbold as a person than he'd really done before.

The bad news for me is that there's still not a whole lot for me to use to hook Grimbold in with the overarching story of the campaign. The good news is that Rich doesn't need me to hook him into the story – as long as I give him monsters to slay for a couple of hours every Friday, he'll keep enjoying the game.

The fact that he grew up in the Burning Wood did give him a tie to Etholas (which Jeremy provided). Grimbold's criminal background suggests some possible story hooks as well – what if someone captures him and threatens to make him face justice for his crimes unless he helps his captor in some way? Could I tie Grimbold to either the Keepers or the Kindred of the Shattered Gate through that background element? I'm going to wait and ponder that more as the campaign unfolds.

Turuk: Mountains

Chris chose a single background element from *PH2*, largely because he already had the important elements of Turuk's background figured out and didn't feel any need to fit them into the *PH2* background system. Here's what he wrote:

Turuk the Victor comes from a small mountain tribe of goliaths. He believes he heard the voice of Avandra on the wind, calling him down from the mountains to Greenbrier. Although he was raised among the cold, craggy peaks, he thinks Avandra might be pushing him toward some greater challenge than a simple mountain life.

Turuk took the "Mountains" background from *Player's Handbook 2* (page 178). He gains a +2 bonus to Athletics check as a benefit.

The mountains background doesn't give me a lot to work with, except when it asks, "What brought you out of the mountains to become an adventurer?" – a question that Chris has already answered. Turuk received a call, which he couched (in typically goliath fashion) not as a purpose or a quest but as a *challenge*.

Like Uldane, then, Turuk's devotion to Avandra will become relevant to the campaign partly when the party cleanses Avandra's shrine in the chasm, and more fully later on when the Keepers of the Cerulean Sign come into play. But his sense of being drawn to a challenge – well, like Rich, Chris is going to be happy with an action-packed pace for the campaign. Combat encounters of ever-increasing difficulty can let Turuk feel like he's proving himself to Avandra and demonstrating his worthiness for whatever greater challenge lies ahead.

Etholas: Forest, Wealthy

Jeremy picked two background elements. Interestingly, he has one element in common with Grimbold, and the other is opposite one of Grimbold's (Etholas is wealthy, Grimbold is poor). Here's what Jeremy wrote:

Forest: *Etholas spent his youth and early adulthood wandering the woods near Greenbrier and venturing into the outskirts of the Burning Wood. Eventually, he became a woodsman and then a guardian of the Fire Glade, where he communes with primal spirits.*

Wealthy: *The son of the village's oldest elder, Etholas grew up wanting for nothing, for his mother came to Greenbrier decades ago with elven riches. Their household makes no show of wealth, instead using their means to help the community.*

Really, Jeremy hasn't given me anything more than we worked out together in the first session. Etholas is the keeper of the Fire Glade, and his mother is Eldest Birel Stormwatcher. I'm still hoping that I can get him entangled in village politics through his mother (when Elder Marti Veran or her grandson decides that she should be Eldest, not some hundred-year-old elf). That feels like low-level adventure material, and maybe I should try to work that in sooner rather than later – perhaps once the group has finished with the Free RPG Day adventure and before they make their third trip into the chasm. As an alternative, I wonder if I can use it to get the group back to Greenbrier after they've wandered as far afield as Lake Town – Etholas gets word that his mother is in trouble and the group rushes back to deal with it, which segues into their next round of exploring the chasm.

The forest background that Etholas and Grimbold share has me thinking about the group's visit to Cendriane, which I have penciled in for the start of the paragon tier. Probably the thrust of that visit should be about exploring what happened to the Burning Wood, why it is the way it is, and what might be done about it.

Finally, I wonder about exploring the tension between Etholas's wealthy background and Grimbold's poor one. I'm reluctant to do too much with that, primarily because this is a casual lunchtime game. If I wanted to go into high drama and the players were game for it, I'd certainly play up that tension between the two characters and make them really work at finding a common ground for trusting each other despite it.

Oskar: Tinker

Mike's a busy man. I'm his manager, so in theory I could tell him to drop everything and pick some backgrounds for his character, darn it! But because I'm his manager, I want him to get *Monster Manual 3* done on time and turned over to development, so I'm not going to harass him too much. Besides, he's given me plenty to work with. Here's our email exchange on the topic:

Me: Did you use a background from *PH2*? If so, what is it?

Mike: Not yet, but I would like to now that *PH2* is out. Not sure which one, though. I'm thinking that Oskar has Thievery as a class skill because he spent a lot of his time as a youngster taking things apart to see how they worked.

Me (a month later): We're going to call this an invented background in the occupation category, "Tinker." That's enough for me to work with, unless you want to choose other elements.

Mike: Sounds good. Sorry I didn't do this earlier. Flipping through *PH2*, I realized that the only non-racial backgrounds that have Thievery as associated skills are the Criminal occupation and a birth Among Another Race (specifically, halflings). But Mike's explanation for why he has Thievery as a class skill makes sense and fits with the story of his character as he's presented it so far, so I'm happy to effectively invent a new background that covers what Mike wants to do with his character.

The tinker occupation we've invented doesn't give me much to work with in hooking Oskar into my campaign story. But "not much" isn't the same as "nothing." He spent a lot of time taking things apart in his youth – so what if he took some things apart that he shouldn't have? What if he pried into secrets he wasn't supposed to learn? Just like Nordil discovered something horrible on an early expedition into the Underdark, perhaps Oskar was also exposed to the alien, monstrous evil beneath the mountains through his constant, inquisitive tinkering.

As I think about it, though, and look at what I wrote last time about Nordil's background, I'm remembering how I decided to make Those Who Hear, the aberrant-worshipping cult in Lake Town, devoted to the same aberrant entity that was imprisoned beneath Greenbrier Chasm – because I didn't want to muddy the waters. Having *Something Else* lurking or imprisoned beneath the southern mountains runs the risk of muddying those waters I earlier strived to keep clear. I think it might be better if what both Nordil and Oskar were exposed to is some information about the Keepers, the Kindred of the Shattered Gate, or perhaps Those Who Hear – keeping it all connected, not just to the grand themes of the campaign (aberrant monstrosities), but to the specific details (the Speaker in Dreams and organizations related to it).

Campaign Arc Update

On that note, it's probably worth an update of that sketchy campaign arc, now that I think about it. I've penciled in a couple of other ideas I want to make sure I don't lose as the campaign moves along.

Level 1–3: Greenbrier Chasm – First forays, reprisals (from *Rescue at Rivenroar*), second delve (using Free RPG Day adventure), third visit plants seeds for Tower Watch. This might also be the time to do something with Elder Marti Veran and her grandson.

Level 4–5: Tower Watch – explore the ruins, fight orcs, find the observatory and learn about the comet.

Level 6–8: Lake Town – draw on *Speaker in Dreams* and *Last Breaths of Ashenport*.

Level 9–11: Greenbrier Chasm (second foray, fighting foulspawn and mind flayer boss) – introduce *Lords of Madness* organizations! If I don't use Elder Veran at level 3, I should do it now.

Level 11–12: Visit Cendriane in the Feywild.

Level 12–13: Harrows Pass (probably just a single adventure) – emerge into the Skins, outside Gloomwrought (in the Shadowfell). Connection between keepers and Keepers?

Level 14–20: *The Gates of Firestorm Peak*.

Level 21–28: Greenbrier Chasm (third foray: aboleths, swordwings, gibbering orb)

Level 29–30: Fight the Speaker in Dreams.

About the Author

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